

The left
that didn't
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PAGE 4

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THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT, PART TWO

Reagan's legacy of

HOT AIR

Dick Russell page 10

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African-American: what's in a name?

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

Ramona Edelin's tireless campaign to change the official nomenclature for America's citizens of African descent finally has borne fruit: "African-American" is now more beautiful than "black." The new designation officially was christened here last December following a meeting of 73 black leaders.

Convened under the auspices of Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition, the meeting—which included leaders from an extraordinarily wide range of organizations—was called to help plan a "National Black Agenda" conference next March in Washington, D.C. During the gathering, Edelin, who is president of the National Urban Coalition, lobbied hard to convince her colleagues of the need for a name change, but no specific action was taken on the matter.

However, at a news conference following the leadership assembly Jackson said the term "African-American" is more appropriate as a label for Americans of African descent when a reporter questioned him about his repeated use of the term. "Just as we were called colored, but were not that...and then Negro, but not that, to be called black is just as baseless," he said. "To be called African-American has more cultural integrity as a designation; it puts us in our proper historical context" because it is inextricably linked "to some land base, some histori-

cal cultural base." Jackson's remarks were only a sidelight to the original purpose of the press conference, but news of the name change became the big story.

Changing concepts: Although the label adjustment caught the media's fancy, blacks, particularly intellectuals and organizers, have been using the term "African-American" interchangeably with "black" for many years. Some leaders charged that the inordinate focus on the subject of ethnic labels is yet another media attempt to distract attention from the real problems afflicting this country's black communities. "All of this attention devoted to semantics is attention not devoted to improving the education of inner-city children, improving health care or providing jobs," says Margaret Burroughs, founder and president emerita of the DuSable Museum of African-American History here. "Most serious black people concluded long ago that 'African-American' was the most accurate term of description; why it's news now is puzzling to me."

But according to Edelin, the name change sets the stage for a real attack on the problems Burroughs outlined. "The shift in our self-concept that results from calling ourselves African-American could be the beginning of a serious cultural offensive," Edelin says. "When a child in a ghetto calls himself African-American, immediately he's international. The change takes him from the ghetto and puts him on the globe. It helps us realize that we are not just former slaves living in the U.S. and makes it easier to change our children's dwarfed perceptions of themselves."

Jackson also emphasizes the cultural dimension. At a January conference of the African-American Institute held in Lusaka, Zambia, the former presidential candidate said, "There is such despair in our children, so much dope, crime, self-destruction, such aimlessness. They feel so unimportant to themselves. We must attempt to lift our children by the power of their culture."

History of labels: Black America's semantic embrace of its African heritage actually is nothing new. During the late 1700s and early 1800s, many free black organizations used the term African to make plain the gap between their debased American identity and their lost origins. The Free African Society, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Masonic African Lodge, the African Free Schools, and the African Clarkson Society are examples of organizations that proudly emphasized their African roots.

The tide turned against that covert identification with the mother continent during the 1830s when pro-slavery interests mounted vigorous, well-funded campaigns to convince free blacks to return to Africa. Groups like the American Colonization Society alleged that blacks were inherently incapable of living among European-Americans as anything but slaves and thus, they argued, free blacks were more suited for life in Africa. This transparent attempt to bolster the institution of slavery provoked blacks

to assert their identities as "colored" Americans in reaction. "Colored" fell out of favor following the abolition of slavery and black leadership settled on the term "negro."

During this period there was a flurry of pseudoscientific books published describing blacks as little more than beasts. Volumes such as John H. Van's ditty, *Negroes a Subordinate Race*, Rev. G.C. Hasskarl's *The Missing Link: Has the Negro a Soul?*, Charles Carroll's *The Negro a Beast* and Josiah Nott's crudely racist *Types of Mankind* were distributed widely and were profoundly influential. As the 20th century approached, black Americans found themselves under attack physically as well as academically; racial lynchings had become the rage during the 1880s and 1890s as thousands of mostly southern blacks were murdered.

This wanton violence sparked a huge northward migration, and groups like the Afro-American Council were formed on the platform of racial solidarity and self-help. Again, an open acknowledgement of African roots seemed to characterize the thinking of many black leaders and theorists. Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist movement virtually embodied this sentiment. He urged blacks to reject European standards and embrace African civilization. At its peak in 1923, Garvey's various organizations claimed an international membership in the millions. The Jamaican-born black nationalist saw no conflict in naming one of his groups the Universal Negro Improvement Association, another the African Communities League and yet another the Black Cross Nurses. Garvey considered the capitalized term "Negro" an honorable label for people of African descent.

The artistic movement dubbed the Harlem Renaissance was focused on the emerging identity of the "new Negro": a cosmopolitan sophisticate with one foot planted in the European canon and the other in the artistic traditions of the African diaspora. Although various publications, some

INSIDE STORY

scholars and activists continued using terms like "black" and "Afro-American," the term Negro became the preferred label.

It remained that way until the late '60s, when the Black Power Movement ushered the word "black" into common usage. By proudly adopting a label traditionally deemed negative, black Americans sought to subvert European culture's seemingly omnipotent power of definition. It was an aggressive assertion of black America's ability to name itself. When singer James Brown hit the Top 10 of the pop music charts in 1968 with the song "(Say it Loud) I'm Black and I'm Proud," it signaled a major change. Before that era, the word "black" was used as a pejorative adjective in most African-American communities.

Social context: African-Americans periodically have adjusted their nomenclature to accommodate the often brutal exigencies of history, but each of those changes are part of one continuing struggle for an authentic identity. Blacks keep searching for what was lost between the motherland and the plantation. In recent years that quest has grown more insistent as the consequences of low self-esteem—crime, drug use, violence, homicide, teenage pregnancy, etc.—grow more widespread and manifold. The social context of an America less tolerant of the psychic wounds inflicted by its racist past demands African-Americans intensify the search even more.

"In our history books, there is a tremendous denial of the tragic truth of the slave trade," Jackson said in his Lusaka address. "People tend not to know, to wipe it off. We are the living descendants of this massive dislocation of people. There is a grand deletion of our history as Americans—a gaping hole in our culture. Others came to drop their chains; we were issued chains on arrival. It is the main moral dilemma of our society's existence. The number one threat is our inability to come to grips with the question of race."

CONTENTS

Inside Story: African-Americans—the game of the name	2
Closing another Iran-contra chapter without opening the book	3
In Short	4
Bush's basket of appointees	6
The U.S. smoke screen on chemical weapons	7
Guatemala—unions struggle to survive	8
Guatemala—the government's sharp right turn	9
Greenhouse effect, part two: Reagan's legacy of hot air	10
Editorial	14
Letters Sylvia	15
Viewpoints: Guatemala's student movement	16
Constitutional perestroika	17
In Print: <i>Manufacturing Consent</i> , deconstructing dissent	18
Subtle censorship, American-style	19
In the Arts: Soviet TV opening commercial channels	20
<i>Glasnost</i> and poetic cinema	20
Soviet neoclassical jazz anarchy	21
Classifieds Life in Hell	23
<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> redux	24

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By Richard Ryan

WASHINGTON, D.C.

IT APPEARS THAT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S foreign policy, like the Kennedy assassination, is about to become a locked room in which large chunks of history have permanently vanished.

On January 4, a major subplot of the Iran-contra conspiracy came to a sudden anticlimax when the Justice Department unexpectedly dropped all charges against 11 international businessmen who had been accused two years earlier of trying to ship more than \$2 billion worth of illegal arms to Iran. The case's dismissal wrecked hopes of journalists and investigators that a trial might pierce the fog of questions clouding the Reagan administration's secret foreign policy.

If the trial, scheduled to start in February, had gone forward, the indicted businessmen had promised the media that they would demonstrate wide knowledge and approval within the Reagan administration of the Iran arms-for-hostages deal. While the White House has insisted that the planning and execution of the Iran arms shipment was confined to a rogue operation in the White House basement which began in 1985, the defendants hoped to show that the deal had in fact begun much earlier and that U.S. arms moved to Iran with the approval of State Department and Pentagon officials. By making such allegations the cornerstone of their defense, the accused managed to keep their case in the media spotlight throughout a grueling two-year, pre-trial struggle.

The "Hashemi case," as it was dubbed, emerged from a massive U.S. Customs sting operation that relied on secret tapes of conversations between the defendants and Cyrus Hashemi, an Iranian arms dealer turned customs informant. Those indicted included the former attorney of Saudi financier Adnan Khashoggi, a retired Israeli general, and William Northrop, a mysterious figure linked by various sources to Israeli intelligence, the CIA and several covert ventures around the world.

When he announced his decision to drop charges, U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani told a New York federal court the dismissal was based on his inability to find government witnesses to counter defense assertions that U.S. government policy formally, if secretly, encouraged arms deals with Iran. Giuliani also admitted Hashemi's death had deprived him of his key witness.

A more parochial hypothesis, offered by defense attorney Michael Sporn, is that Giuliani, already stung by losing the widely publicized corruption case against beauty queen turned politician Bess Myerson, could not risk another dramatic defeat at a time when he is considering running for the New York mayor's office. Sporn, who represented William Northrop in the Hashemi case, also suggested that the Justice Department, anxious to avoid more open-air dissection of the administration's cover operations, was happy to endorse Giuliani's political strategy.

If Sporn's scenario is correct, then irrelevant provincial maneuvers buried a case with international ramifications, a brewing drama featuring enough clues and contradictions to delight the most hardened conspiracy buff.

Interred with his knowns: Giuliani's deceased key witness played one of the most

New skeletons stored in the Iran-contra closet

tantalizing roles in this plot. Hashemi first appeared in U.S. news accounts in the spring of 1980, when he approached the Carter administration with an offer to exchange U.S. arms for the American hostages then held captive in Iran. To avoid prosecution for possible commerce violations, he subsequently became an informant for U.S. Customs, continuing all the while to move in the twilight world of the international weapons trade.

Indeed, Hashemi may have been involved in secret arms shipments between the U.S. and Iran that began as early as 1981. These, Reagan critics speculate, were the payoffs in a deal between the Reagan campaign and the Tehran government not to release the American hostages before the November 1980 presidential elections.

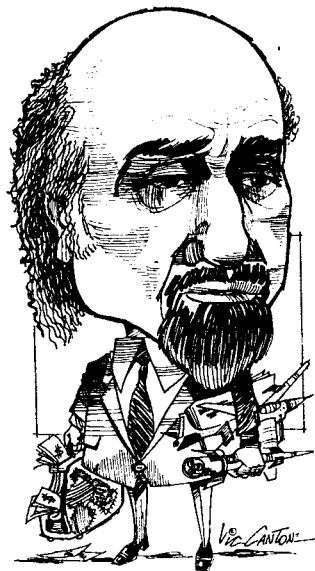
In April 1986 most of the arms dealers involved in the plot were arrested. Only weeks later Hashemi died in New York of what was apparently a heart attack induced by a mild form of leukemia from which he suffered. Some parties, including Hashemi's family, have suggested that he was murdered to prevent him from testifying against Israeli intelligence operatives. *In These Times* was unable to turn up any evidence of foul play.

In recent months, however, the media has been less obsessed with Cyrus Hashemi than with William Northrop, who spent four months in jail following his arrest and was released on \$2.5 million bond. An American married to an Israeli citizen, prior to his indictment Northrop worked for the Tel Aviv-based Mipha Corporation, which, like most Israeli arms firms, is closely connected to Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. As further evidence that his actions were authorized by the Israeli government, Northrop's lawyer said he was prepared to show that in early 1986 Northrop told his Iranian counterparts that no deal could be made until four Israeli soldiers being held in Lebanon were released.

News accounts have subsequently placed Northrop in the tangled network of Israeli intelligence officers and arms suppliers who operated in Central America throughout the '80s. Working through the "Arms Supermarket" or "Operation Black Eagle," Israeli operatives such as Micha Harrari in Panama and David Marcus Katz in Honduras stepped in to fill a void created by congressional restraint on American spies and arms merchants. Jose Blandon, a former aide to dictator Manuel Noriega, has identified Northrop as an associate of Harrari's.

Nir missed: Northrop has consistently refused to discuss his intelligence connections. Last week, however, he agreed to address the particulars of his case with *In These Times*. Taking a more conspiratorial view than his lawyer, Northrop suggested that Giuliani, a Republican appointee, decided to drop the case when he realized he would be unable to prevent the defendants from subpoenaing senior Reagan administration officials, including former Secretary Casper Weinberger and former Attorney General Edwin Meese.

"There's no way Giuliani could ever quash



Manucher Ghorbanifar

a subpoena on Meese," Northrop asserted, noting that Meese admitted he followed the Hashemi sting operation while at the same time helping North arrange arms deals with Iran. Northrop says his lawyers also sought the testimony of Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian arms merchant who worked closely with the White House on hostage ransom schemes, and with Amiram Nir, a senior Israeli intelligence official who died last December when the small plane in which he was a passenger crashed in Mexico during the course of a putative "avocado buying" trip (see *In These Times*, Dec. 21, 1988).

Despite his judicial vindication, Northrop remains bitter about his treatment by the Americans. He told *In These Times* he intends to file a breach of contract suit against the U.S. government either in London or Tel Aviv—"probably London, because the Is-

You could never figure the Iran-contra plays without a scorecard. Now, with so many balks, fouls, errors and hits in the late innings, there's little hope of ever tallying up this very inside game.

raelis are too easy for the Americans to pressure. The case has to be brought in a country where there are a lot of American assets the court can seize if I win."

If filed, Northrop's suit may settle issues the dismissal of the Hashemi case leaves unresolved. The looming question is whether the U.S. approved the dealings of Northrop and his fellow businessmen. Several of Northrop's co-defendants said that in 1985 and 1986 Northrop repeatedly visited the American embassy in Tel Aviv, and one recent wire service story suggested that Northrop had even conferred with deceased CIA chief William Casey. Northrop now asserts he did talk with Casey, and says that in his

calls on the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv he received blueprints of American military components. The blueprints, according to Northrop, were used in Israeli factories to duplicate spare parts for planes and tanks, which were then shipped to Iran.

Merchant offenses: A second and more troubling puzzle is why, if the U.S. knew and approved of Northrop's operation, were the arms merchants arrested? A likely explanation is the sheer size of the deal. The \$2.5 billion worth of arms that Northrop's group was trying to sell pre-empted much smaller sales being supervised by the White House. (Final congressional tabulations placed the White House-initiated sales to Iran at slightly over \$40 million.) Since Northrop's group offered the Iranians a larger amount of goods, it is conceivable that Meese (a strong supporter of Oliver North's Iran project) would have wanted Northrop and his fellow arms merchants out of the way once the businessmen had whetted the Iranians' appetite for an arms-for-hostage swap.

A significant clue to Meese's intentions in authorizing the arrest of Northrop and his colleagues may rest in a footnote in the Tower Commission report on the Iran-contra affair. The footnote cites a CIA chronology that reveals Iranian businessman Manucher Ghorbanifar was arrested in Switzerland on the same day as several of the Hashemi case defendants but was released almost immediately after Oliver North intervened with legal authorities. Ghorbanifar's involvement with Northrop's group, as well as with the official White House-sponsored arms deal, suggests that the Reagan administration used at least three channels for getting U.S. arms to Iran:

- contacts previously made in Iran by American officials such as Richard Secord (who had been an Air Force attache in Tehran during the shah's reign);
- contacts first cultivated by the Israelis, such as Manucher Ghorbanifar; and
- quasi-official channels opened by private businessmen with intelligence contacts, such as Northrop.

This variety of conduits for weapons demonstrates how easily the Reagan administration could have set loose a flow of arms to the Iranian government as soon as the Reagan team assumed power in early 1981.

Northrop himself believes that a deal was struck between the Reagan campaign and the ayatollah in 1980. He further states that numerous shipments of American arms took place in the early '80s. Arms dealer John Delaroque, an unindicted co-conspirator of Northrop who lives in southern France, told *In These Times* that, based on reports circulating in the Mediterranean arms shipping community, anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion worth of American weaponry was sold to Iran in the '80s, all with the approval of the U.S. government.

The purpose of these shipments, at least some of which have been documented, may never be known. Congress has consistently refused to probe the early stages of the Reagan administration's relationship with the Iranians. With the Hashemi case exploded and the North prosecution imploding, the search for the key pieces to the Iran-contra puzzle will be all the harder for those who would open the government to the scrutiny of its citizens. □

Richard Ryan is a freelance writer based in Washington, D.C.

By Joel Bleifuss

So now, what's left?

In recent weeks purveyors of conventional wisdom have been off at the mouth bidding farewell to Ronald Reagan. It is tempting to hose down those saccharine sentiments and expose, once again, the underlying ugliness of Reagan's rule. But that exorcistic exercise might be better directed by turning a critical eye to the left. How did the left fail? *In These Times* put this question to the following people:

Michael Harrington, co-chair of Democratic Socialists of America, New York: "The greatest failure of the broad left in terms of the Democratic Party was the refusal to elaborate a program to deal with the current economic crisis. I take the non-debate over the Jackson tax proposals at the Atlanta convention as a horrible case in point. Now in terms of the narrower left—I mean the socialist left, the anti-capitalist left—it's not that we failed or that we did wonderfully well, which we didn't, but that we survived. I think it was a terribly difficult time from the beginning of the economic recovery in 1983 to the congressional elections in the fall of 1986. Many people simply gave up any hope of change. Since then there have been some hopeful signs, like the Jackson campaign, like the mobilization on reproductive rights that is now developing, like the much greater realism of the socialist left."

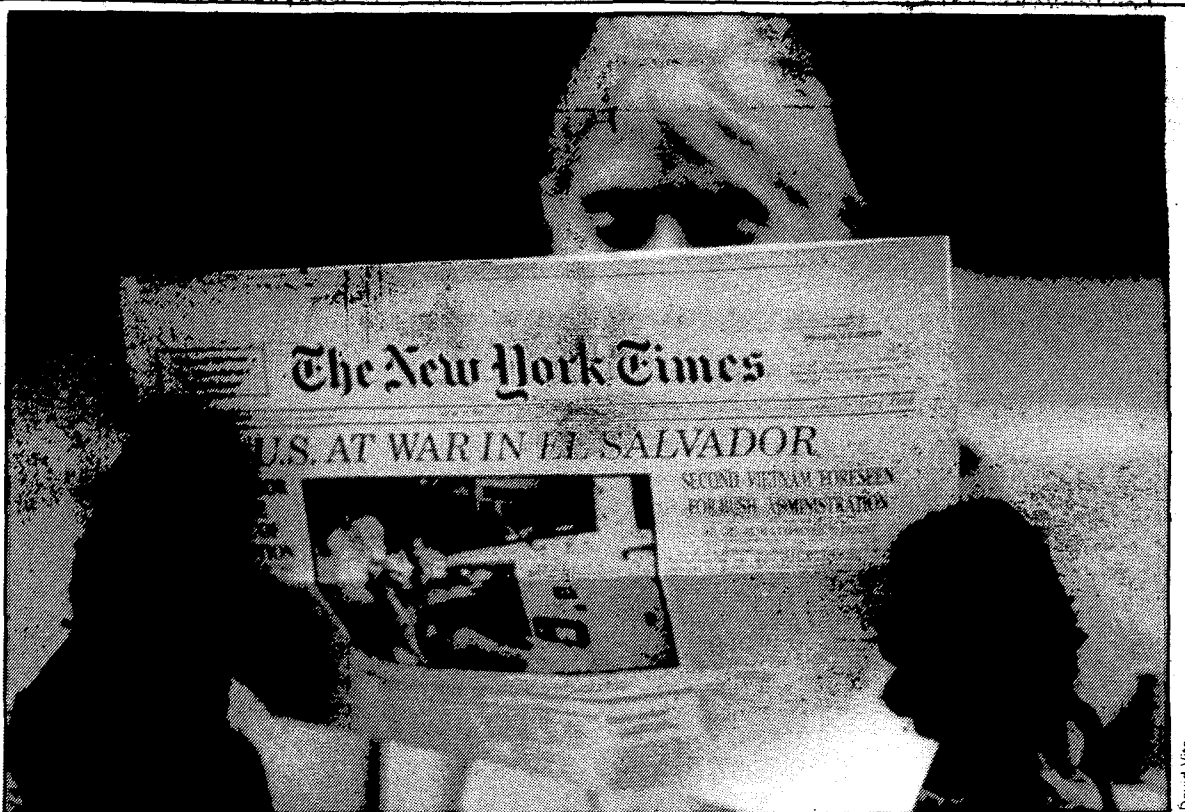
Holly Sklar, author of *Washington's War on Nicaragua*, Boston: "Like the country, the left often appears more racist and sexist than eight years ago—as left conferences frequently demonstrate. In addition, anti-intervention activities should have linked solidarity with Third World self-determination to solidarity with struggles for jobs, farms, services, equality and self-determination in the U.S. Further, too many leftists did little or nothing for the Jackson campaigns. Too many dismissed the electoral element of political power and missed the heat and light of the Rainbow movement."

Nell Irvin Painter, fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, Calif.: "Now do you mean the white left? I think the big problem with the white left is pretending that black people are not citizens in the political and economic sense of the word, as if we represent simply a race. Black people are the best constituency for liberal and left policies in this country. If anybody wants to understand how poor and working-class people think and act they should look at black people. In all fairness, parts of the left have recognized the importance of the Jesse Jackson campaigns, notably *In These Times* and the *Nation*. But I have seen some insensitive reporting from the Northeast in *In These Times*, reporting that missed the class import of racial issues. As for the African-American left, the magnificent thing has been our support of the Jackson campaigns. However, we failed to emphasize early on the commonalities between the needs of black and white working-class people; that is, for too long the Jackson campaign was a racial campaign. Though as I speak I recognize that what I am saying minimizes the import of cultural/racial styles in politics."

Ralph Nader, consumer advocate, Washington, D.C.: "The left didn't establish a distinct grass-roots political organization to either challenge or leverage the Democratic Party in the direction of progressive politics. That's why the party establishment has always been more concerned with the Reagan Democrats rather than the much larger number of progressive Democrats. The Reagan Democrats have defected, or threatened to defect. Therefore they have leverage. The progressive wing has been taken for granted. If Reagan was so bad, why wasn't there more organization at the community level by the left? Because it had been co-opted by the establishment Democrat figures."

Maggie Kuhn, founder and national convener of the Grey Panthers, Philadelphia: "We've been wimps. We have not been as aggressive and as pointed in our social analysis as we should be. I think we have failed to make the connection between the bloated military budget and the dud HUD—the fact that there has been no attention to a viable housing policy and we have hordes of uncouneted homeless on the streets. The cuts in a whole range of human services are horrible, scandalous. We have not been sufficiently outraged. And I get terribly annoyed at the Democrats. I think the Democrats in Congress have to shape up, and the progressive people in the U.S. have to hold them accountable."

Todd Gitlin, author of *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, Berkeley, Calif.: "There was an opportunity in 1981-82 to transform anxiety and upset over the administration's nuclear war policies into a deep criticism of the essential trajectory of the nuclear arms



David Vita

Guerrilla journalism: On the morning of January 5, some New Yorkers who plunked in 50 cents to get that day's dose of "all the news that's fit to print" got a little surprise—a mock front page of the *New York Times*. About 20,000 copies of the mock edition were distributed, most through *Times*' vending machines. Published by an ad hoc anonymous group, New Yorkers for a Free El Salvador, this "people's edition" ran the banner headline, "U.S. at war in El Salvador." Under this headline were included the following stories: "El Salvador on the verge of revolution," "Second Vietnam foreseen for Bush administration" and an "Editors' apology." The apology began, "Although we normally address specific instances of misreporting and poor editing under the inconspicuous corrections column on page three, in this case our journalistic efforts have been so extensive and systematic that we have deemed it necessary to devote front page space to an official apology. The subject of concern is our reporting (or lack of reporting) on El Salvador over the past two decades. It is clear that our overall coverage has closely followed the agenda set by the U.S. government during this time." As an example of this poor *Times* coverage, a coordinator of the blitz cited a Dec. 24, 1988, story, ominously headlined, "Leftist rebels bomb Salvador ministry, killing four and wounding 34." Only later did readers of the story learn that it was a legitimate military target, the Salvadoran defense ministry, not, say, the education ministry, that was bombed. Further, in the third paragraph of the story was the supposedly related news item, a paragraph that read: "Terrorists also blew up a biology laboratory today at the national university in San Salvador, and shot to death a night watchman, a school official said. The university, the nation's biggest, with 35,000 students, has been the scene of demonstrations by leftist students." A blitz coordinator, who wished to remain anonymous, told *In These Times*, "It's well-known that the military sees the university as a 'hotbed of subversion.' As other reports have indicated, the bombing of the university is clearly an attack by the military and the death squads, not, as the *Times* inferred, by the rebels" (see *ITT*, Jan. 11). The people's edition asked readers to call the *Times* at (212) 556-1234 to protest such "distorted coverage." According to the blitz coordinator, the resulting calls tied up the switchboard, forcing the New York Times Company to temporarily shut down its switchboard. *Times*' editors were not amused. The paper has threatened to sue anyone found to have tampered with its vending boxes or to have infringed upon its copyrighted logo.

Western problems: Sante Fe residents fear a hot time in the old town

SANTE FE, N.M.—In the swank ballroom of Sante Fe's Eldorado Hotel a crowd of 350 recently gathered to see artwork by New Mexico's most famous artists and to give their support for Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety.

The "Art Bash Against Hot Trash" art auction raised \$20,000 for the Concerned Citizens' lawsuit fund and kicked off a new episode in the increasingly divisive regional debate over the Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP). The WIPP site, located outside Carlsbad in southeastern New Mexico, is a proposed permanent depository for the radioactive wastes from the nation's nuclear weapons plants.

The facility's opening, originally scheduled for Oct. 1, 1988, has now been delayed until the end of this year. But elected officials in New Mexico, Colorado and Idaho have pledged to get the facility open as soon as possible to avert waste disposal crises in their home states.

The Energy Department characterizes the WIPP site as vital to its decades-long, \$200 billion program for modernizing and cleaning up the nation's 40-year-old nuclear weapons plants. A successfully operating waste site would be a public relations boon for the DOE, proving to the public that the department is serious about waste cleanup and serving as an example of the DOE's ability to operate a nuclear weapons-related facility within the strengthened environmental regulations of the last two decades.

But environmentalists say the DOE is ruining this opportunity. They cite as potential hazards structural and geological problems with the 2,150-foot underground grid of caverns and tunnels that have been dug into an ancient salt formation, as well as deficiencies with the DOE-designed TRUPACT II waste container and an inexperienced trucking company that was contracted to haul the wastes.

The depository must pass a number of legislative and regulatory hurdles before it can open. The site must meet EPA standards that require radioactive wastes be isolated from human exposure and natural occurrences for 10,000 years. The facility also must comply with the Resource Conservation and Recov-

ery Act. The act requires that facilities receiving "mixed wastes," radioactive material mixed with other toxic substances, be licensed according to set guidelines.

Melinda Kassen, an attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund in Boulder, Colo., may represent Concerned Citizens when the group initiates a lawsuit against the DOE in the event the WIPP site is opened without complying with environmental regulations. Kassen says the DOE did not consider licensing the site until a few months ago. Such licensing usually takes more than a year for approval.

"It's all part of [the DOE's] create-a-crisis mentality, not to plan for the Recovery Act. Their opening dates have been really unrealistic," says Kassen. "They just have a hard time making the environment a priority."

One crisis is happening outside of Denver, Colo., at the DOE's Rocky Flats facility, where plutonium triggers for the nation's nuclear arsenal are produced. Eight boxcars, each containing 7,700 gallons of radioactive waste, sit idle at the plant. In October Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus, in a protest of the delayed opening of WIPP, banned all nuclear waste shipments to his state, the destination of Rocky Flats waste since 1968. Andrus' action has forced Colorado

Gov. Roy Romer and Colorado's congressional delegation to either support WIPP or face the closure of the Rocky Flats plant—a source of 6,000 jobs—when it reaches its storage limit in three to four months.

Concerned Citizens board member and 16-year New Mexico state legislator Max Coll is one person

who would not be surprised by a White House action to force open the \$800 million facility. Coll has been following WIPP since 1975, when the project was moved from Kansas to New Mexico. For the next 20 years an estimated 1,450 annual shipments of radioactive waste would exit Interstate 25 a mile from

Coll's house outside Sante Fe.

Coll put it this way: "After 10 years of this, it's hard not to look at it as a plan to dump wastes on a state populated by Indians, Mexicans and refugees. Sure we're paranoid, but the DOE certainly hasn't given us any reason not to be."

—Peter F. Sisler

Elliott Abrams is gone but his stain remains

While America says hello to the Bush administration, it is also saying goodbye to one of Ronald Reagan's leading ideologues, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams.

During his eight years in the State Department, Abrams drew criticism from friends and foes alike for his utopian, often clumsy approach to foreign policy.

Like the president he served, Abrams was reluctant to let the facts get in the way of ideology. In February 1987 he called for an investigation of the State Department's second-ranking intelligence official, Francis McNeil, when McNeil's reports were not consistent with Abrams' political judgment. McNeil resigned, accusing Abrams of "McCarthyism."

Abrams made a habit of making strong assertions without backing them up. In February of 1985 he told Ted Koppel on ABC's *Nightline* that the July 1984 Los Ijanitos massacre in El Salvador, as well as another massacre near that country's Gualsinga River, never occurred. Tutela Legal, the legal aid office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, documented both massacres and attributed the slayings to the U.S.-trained Atlacatl brigade of the Salvadoran military. In September of 1984 both the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe* carried accounts of the bloodbaths.

Abrams again demonstrated his fondness for disinformation when Colombian journalist Patricia Lara, a critic of Abrams' policies, tried to visit the U.S. in October 1986. Upon arriving in New York, Lara was detained and later imprisoned in a Manhattan maximum-security facility. Following a brief hearing in which she was told her name appeared on Immigration and Naturalization Service's "undesirable alien" list, she was deported. Abrams appeared on *60 Minutes*, declaring Lara an "administrative terrorist" in the service of the Cuban government and the Colombian guerrilla organization, M-19. That December, Colombia's defense minister, Gen. Rafael Samudio, informed Lara that the Colombian government had no evidence linking her to any terrorist activity.

The Nicaraguan contras were Abrams' favorite cause. Although Abrams claimed he knew nothing of allegedly illegal work in support of the contras, his testimony was contradicted by that of Gen. John

Singlaub and Lewis Tambs, the former U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica.

As ambassador to Costa Rica and Abrams' subordinate, Tambs oversaw secret contra "supply" shipments from the northern Costa Rica ranch of John Hull, an American citizen and alleged CIA operative. When Costa Rican President Oscar Arias threatened to publicly denounce the airstrip as violating Costa Rica's neutrality policy, North and Abrams threatened to cut \$151 million in U.S. aid to his country.

Despite Abrams' strategy for regional support of the Nicaraguan rebels, the contras no longer have a presence in Costa Rica, and Honduras refuses to sign a military cooperation treaty that would keep the contras in business in that country. John Hull was arrested in Costa Rica on January 13 and charged with drug trafficking.

After the Iran-contra investigation, Abrams tried to regain credibility by masterminding the overthrow of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega. After Tampa and Miami grand juries indicted Noriega on drug-trafficking and racketeering charges in February 1988, the U.S. began to put on the squeeze. The

result was not exactly the Philippine-style "transition to democracy" Abrams had hoped for. The opposition was unorganized and, with the military firmly behind him, Noriega has proved resilient to economic sanctions that have reportedly shrunk Panama's economy by 40 percent.

Like Reagan, Abrams often bolstered his own position by attacking opponents and concocting "facts" to advance his own agenda. Abrams, too, kept public statements to a minimum. He often refused to appear on TV programs in which his opponents were to appear with him, effectively limiting the amount of public debate concerning Latin America.

But perhaps the most important part of Abrams' legacy is how the U.S. now defines human rights and democracy. According to Abrams, anti-communism and human rights foreign policies are one in the same. Furthermore he defines democracy only as "a series of elections in which one democratic president succeeds another." In other words, only communists commit human rights abuses, and democracy no longer requires the freedoms of speech, press, religion or association.

—Kevin O'Donnell

Elliott Abrams



race and the deterrence framework. Instead, the anguish and opposition were narrowed into a nuclear freeze movement that hoped too much for immediate effect and died on the congressional vine. In part this left the moral high ground to Reagan, who seized it with *Star Wars*. The left, such as it is, has also failed to put forth a terribly convincing and sufficiently radical criticism of the military budget. Even the Jackson campaign feared proposing more than minimal cuts."

Ann Lewis, former national director of Americans for Democratic Action, Washington, D.C.: "We did not do more to regain our own connection to American mainstream cultural values. Particularly disturbing was the harsh and painful realization that in 1988 the Republican presidential candidate was again able to use patriotic symbols as partisan weapons. Progressive values built this country, strengthened our homes, families and communities, but because of our failure to communicate those values explicitly and effectively, we enabled the right wing to deny them to us."

Barbara Ehrenreich, co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America, Long Island, N.Y.: "One thing the left did wrong was to overestimate the mass appeal of the new right's social issues. In many instances the left seemed to be intimidated and tried to adopt the new right's pro-family rhetoric. There was even some backpedaling on important issues like abortion and gay rights. The left should have attacked the absolute hypocrisy of right-wing populism. As Reaganomics amply demonstrated, the right always represents the economic interests of the elite, not of the average working person. The left should have responded with a militant economic populism from the start."

Dick Flacks, author of *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: "One of the most fundamental things missing on the left is the lack of an articulated vision or public philosophy that expresses an alternative to the classic liberal competitive individualism that Reagan articulated and reinforced. I think the left—the more radical intellectuals and activists—have assumed that the job of articulating that alternative would be done by mainstream liberals in the New Deal tradition. An effort like Reagan's to fundamentally challenge the welfare state seemed unlikely. But Reagan caught everybody left of center off guard in that sense. It wasn't surprising that it was so hard to come up with an ideological response to Reagan with so much disillusionment in the world with the welfare state and state socialism. I think it is very important at this point in history to revitalize the sense of the possibility of democracy and the collective good, to revitalize visions based on cooperation and equality. Even though Reagan leaves office with tremendous popularity, it is remarkable how people seem to be eager for a restoration of the public sector and governmental services that have been undermined during his years. That popular feeling offers the left some opportunities now."

Abbie Hoffman, organizer and author, Solebury, Pa.: "I think the definitions have to be changed, starting with the word 'left.' We've inherited a sinister name. Like the opposite of 'right' is 'wrong.' In the '60s 'left' worked because we stuck the word 'new' in front of it. Americans love anything that is new. In the '70s some people thought 'progressive' would do, but that went over as well as red spaghetti sauce from a jar. We need to learn how to adapt our language to the rest of the people. The trouble with the left is that we speak English English, rather than American English. Another thing, the left was completely unequipped for the Cold War coming crashing down around us. We were not emotionally or intellectually prepared to handle a world without a Cold War. Then there has been the question of funding. Since the heyday of union organizing, the left has continually had a problem maintaining itself economically. One of these days somebody is going to have to solve that problem."

Heather Booth, president of Citizen Action and the Midwest Academy, Chicago: "I would put the question in the context of things we need to do, opportunities we now can take. Number one, we need to project a national progressive message and presence that's broader than any one issue, but provides a context to comment on a variety of issues as they develop. Two, we need to ensure that our leaders promote those themes and messages. Three, we need to move for accountability of elected leaders, so there is no backsliding as there was on the Reagan budgets or on the MX. We need to tie our values to our issues, to our electoral strategy, as we continue organizing locally and nationally. There is wonderful organizing going on. We just need to convey that we are more than the sum of our parts."

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON, D.C.

IN HIS FIRST CABINET AND WHITE HOUSE CHOICES, George Bush has already established his distance from the Reagan administration and its most conservative supporters. He has made a few bad choices, but for the most part has picked proven administrators and political realists. He has appointed several radical conservatives, but they will occupy positions in which they will likely have little influence on administration policy.

When the right tried to block the appointment of Dr. Louis Sullivan as secretary of Health and Human Services—because of his support for abortion rights—Bush did not withdraw the appointment. He even refused to allow pro-life lobbies to meet with Sullivan. One cannot ask for much more from a Republican administration.

Best and the brightest: Bush's most promising choices are James Baker as secretary of state, Brent Scowcroft as national security adviser, and Richard Darman as director of the Office of Management and Budget. Together, they could dominate foreign and domestic policy.

Baker and Scowcroft both appear ready to reorient American foreign policy away from the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Republican policy is returning to where it was at the height of detente, when Henry Kissinger was secretary of state. Scowcroft, Deputy Undersecretary Lawrence Eagleburger and National Security Council staff member Peter Rodman were Kissinger protégés. All have most recently worked at Kissinger Associates, the former secretary of state's lucrative consulting firm. They disdain ideological flights of fancy and millennial military schemes.

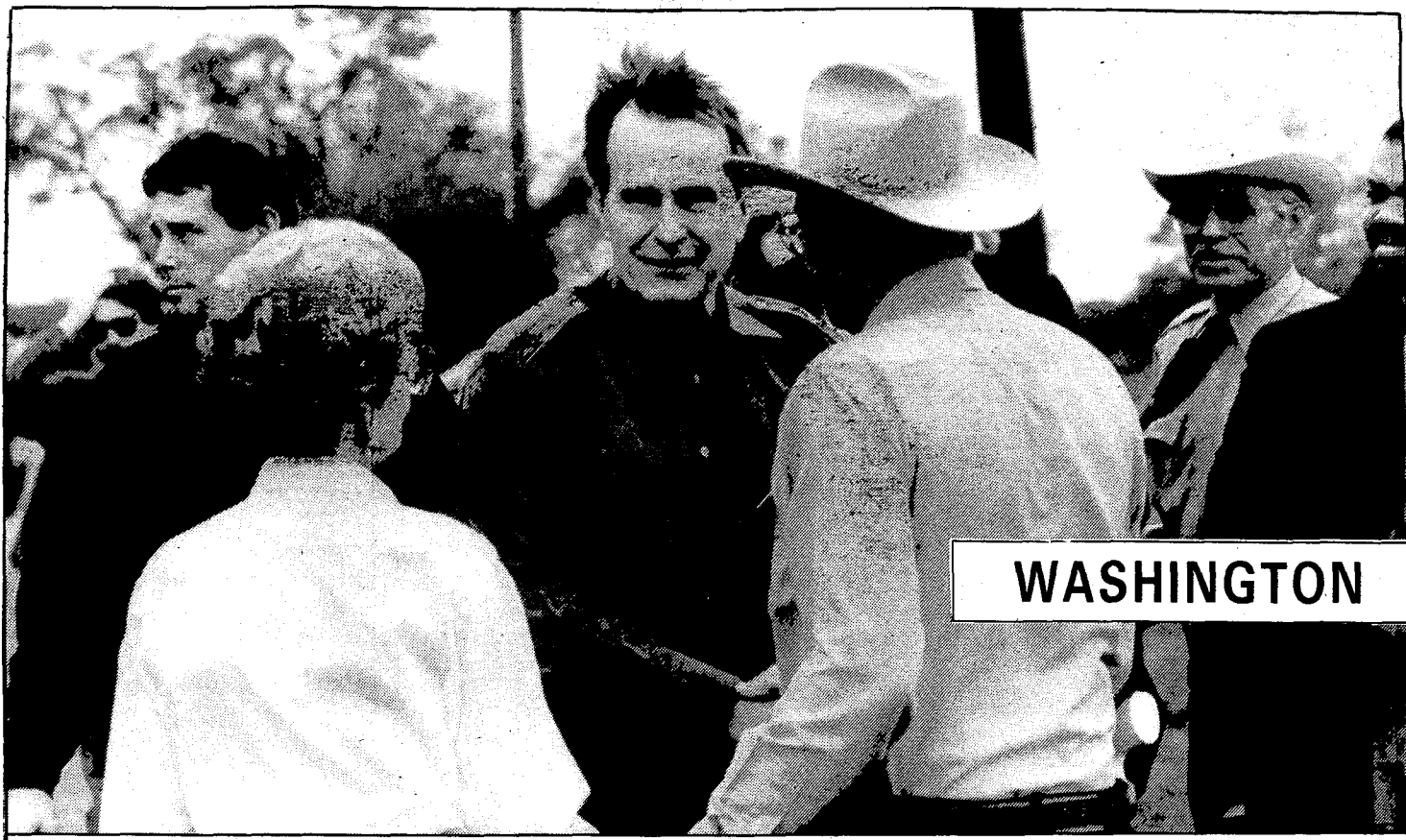
As *In These Times* went to press, Baker was also considering appointing Democrat Robert Hormats as undersecretary of state for economic affairs. Hormats could take the initiative in foreign economic policy away from less-than-stellar Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady.

Darman could take control of domestic economic policy from Brady. He served under Baker at both the White House and Treasury Department and has come as close as any Republican could to advocating industrial policy. One of Darman's key issues is what he has called "corpocracy"—or the tendency of corporate managers to grow complacent about their companies' longterm growth.

OK, but no cigar: As attorney general, Richard Thornburgh has already tilted the department back toward the side of civil rights, but he has also backed appeal of the abortion rights decision *Roe v. Wade*.

Clayton Yeutter was a better than average U.S. trade representative and should do reasonably well as secretary of agriculture, where foreign export barriers will be a big issue. But still unclear is what happens if Yeutter's export strategy fails and farmers begin clamoring for domestic supply management.

Retired Adm. James Watkins, Bush's pick for secretary of energy performed brilliantly as the chairman of the President's AIDS Commission, writing a report recommending strong anti-discrimination measures. A protégé of the late nuclear power proponent Hyman Rickover, Watkins appears suited to the attempt to solve the problem of nuclear



George Bush's cabinet corral includes more also-rans than winners.

WASHINGTON

The Bush brigade fills out its ranks

waste disposal. But Watkins could also resist programs for alternative fuel development and energy conservation.

Education Secretary Lauro Cavazos has already showed that he is willing to fight for greater education funding and to alienate Phyllis Schlafly. "He didn't seem to know much about elementary and secondary education," said the noted housewife cum educator after a meeting with Cavazos.

William K. Reilly, Bush's choice for head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has long been associated with environmental causes, but as a liaison between more ardent environmentalists and corporate polluters. As head of the Conservation Foundation, Reilly tried to work out a compromise on the toxic waste Superfund legislation. Environmentalists are concerned about whether he will play the same role as EPA chief.

Bush's choice for transportation secretary, Samuel Skinner, was chairman of the second largest mass transit system in the country. This experience might prompt him to defend mass transit against the highway lobby.

Questionable, but interesting: Jack Kemp wants to use the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a laboratory for conservative economic schemes. He probably won't get very far, but Kemp will make major national issues of the housing shortage and the decline of northern cities. In the past, these issues have been as invisible as the HUD secretary.

As secretary of Health and Human Services and the administration's highest ranking black official, Dr. Louis Sullivan could prove a vocal spokesman for the poor. But as Sullivan demonstrated during the abortion brouhaha, he lacks Washington political experience and could be eaten up in the shark-infested waters around HHS.

Elizabeth Dole was a lousy secretary of transportation (her main achievement was selling off profitable Conrail) and has had no

experience with collective bargaining or other labor issues. AFL-CIO leaders praised her selection as secretary of labor only because they preferred her to the anti-labor Constance Hornor.

When he served as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, John Tower led the fight for the Reagan military budget increases and fought attempts to encourage "burden-sharing" with NATO and Pacific allies. When he retired from the Senate in 1984, he became a high-priced consultant for military contractors. For these reasons, he would seem ill-equipped to lead the Pentagon as secretary of defense in an era of budgetary austerity and arms reduction negotiations. Tower's only virtue is that if he were to embrace these objectives, he would be good at selling them to Republicans in Congress.

As Bush's chief of staff, John Sununu could follow the path of his fellow New Hampshire, Sherman Adams, who served as Dwight Eisenhower's selfless chief of staff. Sununu's own right-wing political agenda seems to include higher office for himself (he has refused to dispose of a \$250,000 campaign fund). The first big administration battle could be between Sununu and Darman.

For drug czar, Bush should have chosen either someone versed in law enforcement (like his first choice, Arizona Sen. Dennis DeConcini) or someone like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who could communicate with kids who use drugs. Instead, he picked neoconservative foghorn William Bennett, who has no law enforcement background and whose rhetoric appeals principally to people who think that grass is something you mow.

Robert Mosbacher was an oil wildcatter and political fundraiser, two businesses that have little bearing on what a commerce secretary will have to do. He is also, reportedly, a dogmatic free trader.

Without redeeming social value: As the ranking Republican on the Housing Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, New

Mexico Rep. Manuel Lujan Jr., Bush's choice for secretary of the Department of the Interior, championed the sale of federal lands to oil and mining companies, who returned the favor by heavily financing his election campaigns. "He has one of the worst environmental voting records of anybody in Congress. He is James Watt with a pretty face," says Dan Becker, legislative director of Environmental Action.

Carla Hills, Bush's choice for special trade representative, was secretary of HUD under Gerald Ford. What little trade experience she had suggests potential conflicts of interest. She was a partner in a law firm that lobbies for Japanese companies, and she represented a Korean conglomerate, Daewoo Industrial Co. Ltd., in negotiations with American steel companies. In addition, her husband, Roderick Hills, was a lobbyist for the Japanese firm C. Itoh & Co. and represented Toshiba during its recent dispute with the American government. "She is an amateur whose only experience is working for the other side," says one labor official.

Robert Gates, the deputy director of the CIA under William Casey and William Webster, might make a decent deputy national security advisor. But why reward someone who helped Casey deceive Congress about the Iran-contra arms deals? Gates should have been shown the gate two years ago.

It is likely that all of these nominees will be confirmed. Tower and Lujan might get some hard questions from senators, but they have the advantage of being among former colleagues. Labor and business groups that wanted to make a fuss over Hills have decided it's futile. Even with these losers, Bush's appointments represent a major advance over Reagan's 1981 appointees. One need only compare Thornburgh to William French Smith, Scowcroft to Richard Allen, and Dole to Raymond Donovan. If Reagan got a "D plus" for his crew, Bush deserves at least a "B minus."

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

THE RECENT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON chemical weapons (CWs) held in UNESCO's headquarters here provided an interesting contrast between the content of a serious international problem and the form in which U.S. officialdom presents it to the public and the media.

An independent scientists' conference, held at Paris University on the eve of the diplomats' conference at UNESCO, showed that when it comes to studying the real problem, there is no significant ideological split along national lines. Scientists of all nationalities can cooperate. Among the constructive suggestions: accelerate a shift from pesticides whose components can kill people to compounds that really single out insects. For example, whereas DDT was only 4.3 times more lethal for insects than for rats, the ratio for deltamethrin is 2,680 to one.

British, French, German (East and West), American, Soviet, Dutch, Finnish and other experts are all contributing to solutions to the problem of purging the chemical industry of its humanicide branch. Of course, certain developed nations have more experience in the matter and more expertise to provide. The weak position of the poor countries in this, as in so much else these days, is patent. But wherever the resources exist to produce chemical weapons, or to ban them, the division is along personal and ethical lines, not national ones.

Some things never change: The first battlefield use of modern chemical weapons in April 1915 was the work of the distinguished German chemist Fritz Haber, who imposed the new technique on reluctant German army officers with the argument that poison gas would "shorten the war and save human lives." Sound familiar? Other German scientists were always fundamentally opposed to what they considered "a perversion of chemistry." One of them was Haber's wife, Clara, who committed suicide in May 1915 in protest.

The Western Allies in World War I seized on German first use of chemical weapons to brand the Germans as "barbarian Huns"—and also to start using poison gas themselves. In Britain a leading chemical weapons enthusiast was Winston Churchill, who saw the potential for colonial use. In the U.S. chemical weapons fans kept the U.S. from ratifying the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning their use for 50 years. In short, the ethical struggle against chemical weapons transcends national boundaries and always has.

The picture changes when one moves to the level of the political representation of the U.S., headed in Paris earlier this month by Secretary of State George Shultz. Suddenly the world splits in two, with the virtuous, tight-lipped Americans suspiciously out to whip the rest of this corrupt and cowardly world into line.

In the Reagan years American diplomacy—like American military action—has strengthened its own tendency to act more to impress the folks at home than to make friends and influence people in the rest of the world. The success of U.S. foreign policy is measured in how much it makes Americans love themselves. Success, therefore, is easy.

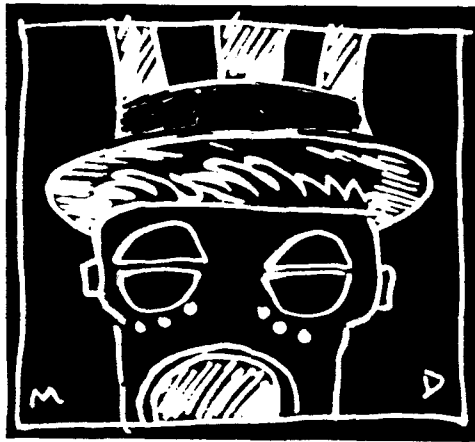
In Paris American representatives characteristically behaved in a way reminiscent of

The U.S. smoke screen on chemical weapons

the playground game of "king of the hill." As the biggest kid on the playground, the U.S. occupies the moral high ground for itself, and refuses to let anybody else up there. In

DIPLOMACY

spite or because of the fact that the U.S. government position, as main avowed producer of modern chemical weapons, is far from exemplary, much of U.S. activity around



the Paris conference consisted in depriving others of the moral high ground.

Dethroning the king: This did not always succeed. Despite the usual rapid U.S. dismissals of his proposals as "nothing new," Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze found high moral ground of his own where he could not be dislodged. Shevardnadze promised to begin elimination of Soviet chemical weapons stockpiles in 1989, called for "the most stringent international verification, including no-refusal on-site inspections," and pledged to do all possible to conclude a comprehensive global ban this year. This was what the world wanted to hear, but even more winning was Shevardnadze's admission that his superpower had been wrong.

"And should anyone say to us that we waited too long before stopping the production of chemical weapons and imposing other prohibitions on them, we would say: Yes, we did wait too long. But having taken the political decision, having made our choice, we are acting unswervingly to fulfill it, rapidly making up for the time lost over the past years and reaching for levels of openness that have no precedent in the past," the amiable Soviet foreign minister said.

This was impossible to beat, especially from the rival superpower, whose budget—announced in Washington while the Paris conference was underway—earmarks funds for new portable launchers to fire a new perfected nerve gas that would remain lethal for days.

But, unlike Shevardnadze, others were more successfully shoved off the moral high ground they deserved to occupy.

First were the Kurds and the Iraqis, the most recent victims of massive Iraqi poison gas attacks. Kurdish representatives were kept out of the conference altogether. A Kurd managed to protest at French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas' final press conference that France, which has the world's best hos-

pitals for chemical burns, had not brought a single Kurdish victim of gas attack to France for treatment.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati asked why such an international conference to reaffirm the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning chemical weapons use hadn't been called during all the years Iraq was using them against Iran.

In most respects, the Iranian Islamic Republic is hardly anyone else's model of comportment. But when it comes to use of poison gas, the evidence gathered by U.N. investigators in 1984, 1986, 1987 and 1988 backed the Iranian position that it was the victim of repeated Iraqi gas attacks.

Velayati said Iran had never resorted to chemical weapons, even in retaliation. "It is necessary for compliance to be recognized and use to be condemned," he pointed out, "or else no one feels bound by the ban."

Experts on Iran's side: Velayati's statement was consistent with expert opinion. At the Paris University conference Dr. Alastair Hay of Leeds University, who has studied effects of mustard gas on Iraqis, confirmed that there was no proof of Iranian use of chemical weapons.

The U.S. is the main avowed producer of modern chemical weapons. Nonetheless, the Reagan administration tried to take the moral high ground at an international conference on the issue.

But far from distinguishing Iranian compliance from Iraqi violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the U.S. has helped Iraq use the "you're another" line of defense already tried out by the U.S. in Southeast Asia, where years of American defoliant ecocide were forgotten in the deluge of unproved (and eventually even disproven) U.S. allegations of Vietnamese responsibility for "yellow rain." Last summer Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz confirmed Iraq's use of chemical weapons, but claimed that Iran had used them first. A U.N. investigation team went to Iraq to look into Iraqi accusations and came away with the impression that Iraq had "manipulated the evidence," as reported by the autumn issue of the Washington-based *Chemical Weapons Convention Bulletin*. Nevertheless, added the *Bulletin*, when the U.N. reports on Iran and Iraq were finally published last August 1, the Associated Press report on the U.N. findings "erroneously stated that the reports accused 'both Iran and Iraq of using chemical weapons.'"

As a result, the impression is widespread that Iran and Iraq are equally guilty. U.S. officials speak of "the tragedy of use of gas in

the Gulf War," without naming Iraq. U.S. condemnation is not based on compliance with or violation of specific laws, but rather is based on whether the U.S. identifies the country in question as friend or foe. Iran is on Shultz's list of "terrorist states," and Iraq is not.

Nobody has worked harder for success at the Geneva negotiations for a comprehensive global chemical weapons ban than West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Certainly the West Germans are uniquely motivated: the Federal Republic may be the only country in the world with thousands of tons of somebody else's poison gas stored on its territory. And so far the U.S. has not even told the Germans where the chemical weapons are stocked. In any case, the Germans have worked constructively in Geneva, and their proposal for ad hoc inspections has been well received. Normally, the high ground at an international chemical weapons conference would have been occupied by Genscher and others taking similar positions, such as Italy's Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti.

Double standard: But the U.S. effectively mined the high ground under Genscher's feet by the way it broke the Libyan chemical plant story: by putting loud moral accusations ahead of factual evidence and creating the impression (with zealous help from *New York Times* columnist William Safire) that without being bludgeoned by the Americans, West Germany would be happily arming Arabs with gas bombs to destroy Israel. The issue was shifted from what Mexico called U.S. "vertical proliferation" to horizontal proliferation and German exports (and not French or Swiss exports, for instance). The uproar obscured the fact that a global ban is needed precisely to make such activities illegal.

The moral high ground is usurped so long as the U.S. goes on setting an example of chemical arms production and claiming the right to apply, and even enforce, not a global ban—which has not yet been concluded—but its own double standard. The Shultz performance in Paris was totally unconvincing to the rest of the world. But so long as the Reagan-Bush administration can give the American people and their Congress the impression that it has whipped all those cowardly foreigners into line, then "toughness" on the world stage is justified. And the national security apparatus can keep sending the bill for this expensive toughness to the American taxpayers.

The East-West blocs vanished from the stage in Paris. Rumania sided with the Arab countries that wanted to link chemical to nuclear disarmament, against the Soviet Union, which put effective pressure on certain Arab states to accept the final compromise. But the result was not exactly the North-South opposition the U.S. seemed to favor.

The U.S. stood alone as world policeman, with its satellite photos, secret intelligence reports, chemical weapons factories and self-proclaimed right to punish evildoers in the Third World, or, in their stead, Libya. In between the lonesome cowboy and the wild South were the calmer statesmen—Genscher, Andreotti, Shevardnadze—trying to solve problems in a fair way. This three-way split is of course only an ephemeral illusion, but it says something about the instability of today's alignments. □

By David Moberg

GUATEMALA CITY

IT WAS THE NIGHT OF "THE BURNING OF THE DEVIL," the pre-Christmas tradition of setting piles of trash ablaze in this city's streets. Workers occupying the Petro-Steel factory here had the perfect devil for burning.

Anomalous named, Petro-Steel actually manufactures plastic bags. So in front of the walls of the plant, which were draped with strike banners, workers had used the bags to create an effigy of the company's principal owner. As night fell the mannequin burned brilliantly, wafting bilious smoke across the darkened street toward the ever-present police.

In mid-November Petro-Steel suspended a union leader when workers slowed down to pressure management to negotiate a contract. Then on November 16 the manager physically kicked another union leader. In protest, the night shift refused to leave the plant. Other shifts joined in as they arrived for work the next day. Sleeping and eating in the plant around the clock, the strikers have held out even though a labor court declared their action illegal—as they rule in almost all strikes in Guatemala—and ordered them fired.

The 50 sit-down strikers, most under age 35 and one-third of them women, took dangerous risks in seizing the plant. A year ago the secretary-general of their new union fled the country after receiving death threats. From 1980 to 1983, during the worst of the military regime's assaults on peasants, workers and their organizations, the army virtually extinguished Guatemala's small labor movement. Most of its leaders were killed, made to "disappear" or forced into exile. In the first two years of the nominally civilian government of President Vinicio Cerezo, Americas Watch reported six unionists killed and eight disappeared. The number has grown since that report last spring, including the mysterious murder of a bank union official in October.

Despite these attacks, Carlos Cordon, the 22-year-old union secretary-general directing the sitdown, believes that the government was not likely to send in troops to evict the strikers. "Because of the situation of supposed democracy," he says, "there would be danger to the government's international image."

In the past few years a new Guatemalan labor movement has emerged in a political climate determined by a precarious balance between the military's desire to crush all popular organization and its need to present a more democratic face to the outside world. This followed years of official bloodshed in which, according to Amnesty International, "tens of thousands" of Guatemalan peasants, workers, intellectuals and political opponents were killed in a country of 8 million.

Renewal and repression: Although still small, representing 4 percent to 5 percent of the workforce and fragmented among different federations, the labor movement during the past couple of years has become bolder and more unified. It has formed the core of a broader, open popular opposition (see accompanying story). Yet its growing influence may have in part prompted the attempted coup by elements of the military last May 11. That coup failed but was a political success. It gave the military even more direct power, reversed concessions Cerezo had made to the labor and popular groups and unleashed new attacks on organizers. Human rights groups report the monthly toll of murders and disappearances has risen since the "technical coup," although still

Labor inches out of the long repression

mainly from selective rather than wholesale attacks.

"They're trying to push the door closed," Rodolfo Robles, director of the Guatemalan office of the International Union of Foodworkers and former leader of a pivotal Coca-Cola workers union, says of the military and government. "We're trying to push it back open with organizing and education. We realize that the government has permitted [greater labor activity] for the purpose of improving its international image. It puts us in an ambiguous situation. We're playing

guatemala

their game, but there are clearly limits, as signaled by the technical coup."

At the end of this month the Guatemalan government promised to start the national dialogue of major political forces that was prescribed for all Central American countries under the 1987 Central American peace pact. Three major union federations have been linked since 1987 with student, peasant and human rights groups in the UASP (Unity of Labor and Popular Action). They have demanded that all groups in their coalition be included in the national dialogue. But Cerezo has suggested that many of them may be rejected since they are not officially registered groups, even though the government had talked with them on other occasions. Although the government has also met with representatives of the united guerrilla movement for the first time in 27 years of fighting, the army and Cerezo also refuse to include the rebels in the dialogue.

In 1983, the military regime of Gen. Rios Montt opened the door slightly to a rebirth of unionism as part of its gradual effort to create a better international image for Guatemala. The first federation to form, CUSG (Guatemalan Confederation of Trade Union Unity), was supported by the AFL-CIO's controversial AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development). Other union sympathizers began to meet secretly in small groups. They had to constantly shift locations, even gathering in garbage dumps, to avoid both outright physical attacks and army infiltration. The turning point came in 1984-85 during a yearlong occupation of the Coca-Cola bottling plant by its militant union, which was fighting the owners' attempt to strip the plant of its assets. In that "liberated territory" a new generation of union leaders met and strategized. In 1985 the Coke union and others formed UNSITRAGUA (Guatemalan Workers Labor Unity), the most militant of the new labor groupings.

Keeping distance: However, the left wing of the union movement, which maintained relationships with the guerrillas in the '70s and early '80s, now keeps its distance from the rebels. Union officials "are very fearful of the old [military] policies that destroyed the unions and popular organizations," explained Danilo Rodriguez, a labor lawyer now in exile in Mexico. "Some comrades wanted radical, militant organizations like previously," said UNSITRAGUA coordinator Hugo Rene Morales Diaz. "Other of us thought that, without losing class conscious-

ness, we needed to put forward a different organization in Guatemala. We needed the space for a renewed labor movement without losing our initial principal."

UNSITRAGUA has worked hard to unite all labor groups and "popular" organizations—mainly peasant, student and human rights groups—and to keep open opportunities to defend workers' interests within a precarious civil society. The only significant labor group outside the UASP coalition is the CGTG (General Federation of Guatemalan Workers), with ties to Cerezo's Christian Democrats. In fact, it too belonged to the UASP until a December 1987 confrontation with the government over electricity price hikes.

Even AIFLD-supported CUSG, regarded by other labor groups as the most conservative and least militant union, participates in UASP along with the Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC), a heavily attacked group that still must operate semiclandestinely among the Mayan Indian peasantry. Robles and others blame AIFLD influence for the difficulties CUSG often poses within the UASP. (On the other hand, Juan Bendfeldt, director of studies for a right-wing, anti-union, extreme free-market business group, says fondly of CUSG, "They are moderates. You can work with those guys. They are not a danger to the institutions.") Nevertheless, UASP tries to maintain unity and bring in new groups, including the Christian Democratic CGTG unions that have been trying to raid CUSG unions.

Despite their separation from the guerrillas, many union leaders view them sympathetically, even though the government still uses alleged guerrilla-labor bonds as an excuse for attacks on unions. "I believe [the effect of the guerrilla movement] is positive," one leader said. "The popular organizations feel the security of a vanguard organization. I'm not talking about physical security. It's more a feeling of backup, of support."

Unions have proliferated rapidly in the past two years, especially among govern-

Decimated and split, Guatemalan unions are becoming bolder and more united in their push to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the mufti government of Cerezo.

ment workers. The small Social Democratic Party, allied with many union leaders and occupying the left of the parliamentary spectrum, had urged Cerezo to ease organization of government workers in exchange for its support in the 1985 elections. Cerezo decided that new government unions could provide a base for the Christian Democratic Party, and encouraged the CGTG, which was founded after his election, to organize them.

But the plan partly backfired, Robles said, as government workers were swept up in the wave of organizing and the spirit of the new labor movement and became more re-

sponsive to class interests than party interests. Now most of the new government unions are not tied to the Christian Democrats.

Robles estimated that there are 12,000 workers in UNSITRAGUA, about 8,000 in the CGTG, less than 5,000 in CUSG and about 30,000 in a new public workers federation that is part of UASP. In addition, there are a variety of independent unions, such as the influential government electrical workers union (STINDE).

Some strategists, like Danilo Rodriguez, who is now director of the Center for Research and Popular Education in Mexico City, believe that the labor movement must try to form alliances with those industrialists and business people oriented toward the domestic market. Many of these capitalists, like the unions, also opposed the electricity rate increases. Rodriguez argues that such capitalists are different from the traditionally dominant agricultural exporters, who have no stake in improving domestic economic conditions and are traditionally so pro-military, anti-democratic and rabidly right-wing that they see "progressive capitalism" as no different from communism.

Others doubt the possibility of dividing Guatemalan capitalists. The owner of Petro-Steel, for example, is a major landowner and operator of a large sugar mill. Much of the growing manufacturing sector is geared mainly toward export. Capitalists seem united in resisting any moves to improve life in the country, fighting even a very weak Cerezo tax reform. Also, though devaluation was inevitable and important for Guatemala's exports, middle- and upper-class consumers who wanted to buy luxury imports resisted it.

In response to the new wavelet of unionization, employers have fought back with *solidarismo*, a form of company unionism that was initiated in Costa Rica in the '50s. More than 200 Guatemalan employers have formed these associations of all employees, including management, who contribute part of their wages to a special fund (often matched by employers, not out of their profits, but out of money that would otherwise be set aside for legally mandated severance pay). *Solidarismo* is used to promote a sense of common interest between employees and employer and to fight unions. As much as repressive threats and capital flight, it has become a major employer weapon.

Preparing for the worst: Like Rodolfo Robles, most Guatemalan unionists seem to expect very little of the Cerezo government but will continue to push for everything they can get. "The reality is it's difficult to organize in all sectors," Robles said. "It's a little easier in the public sector [although even there union leaders are killed and threatened and often so intimidated they are even unwilling to publicly denounce violence against them]. It's very difficult in the countryside, but people are trying. But if a public union like STINDE [the electrical workers] has activities in the countryside, they can invite other people. It's a very slow process, but there are signs of growth."

It is also a very precarious process. UNSITRAGUA, for example, organized itself so that there is a collective leadership and a ready mechanism for replacing leaders who are killed or disappear. Whether they will be forced to rely on such grisly precautions depends a great deal on how much the military cares about the image of Guatemala in the U.S. and Western Europe and how much anybody there cares about the reality of Guatemala. □

By Kevin Robinson

GUATEMALA CITY

GUATEMALA IS MARKING ITS THIRD ANNIVERSARY of civilian rule this month, but human rights groups, grass-roots organizations and unions are finding increasingly little to celebrate. They are rapidly losing faith in the "democratic opening" that was hailed when Vinicio Cerezo assumed the presidency on January 14, 1986, after almost 20 years of military rule.

Critics say the Cerezo government has taken a sharp turn to the right in recent months. In the government's first two-and-a-half years, it took steps to modify some of the country's backward economic structures as well as to ensure political freedoms. A bold tax reform at the end of 1987—the first in at least three decades (see *In These Times*, Oct. 28, 1987)—followed by a historical accord in March with unions and grass-roots organizations, appeared to indicate a liberal shift in the government's policies.

At the same time, despite the continuation of human rights violations, the political opening led to a surge in open public debate and criticism. Some exiles returned to the country and the first Social Democrat-oriented newsweekly since the '70s, *La Epoca*, began circulating on a mass scale.

More important, at the end of 1987 the government held the first conversations with Guatemalan guerrilla organizations since the rebel war began in the '60s, motivating unprecedented forums and conferences here over proposals to negotiate an end to the armed conflict.

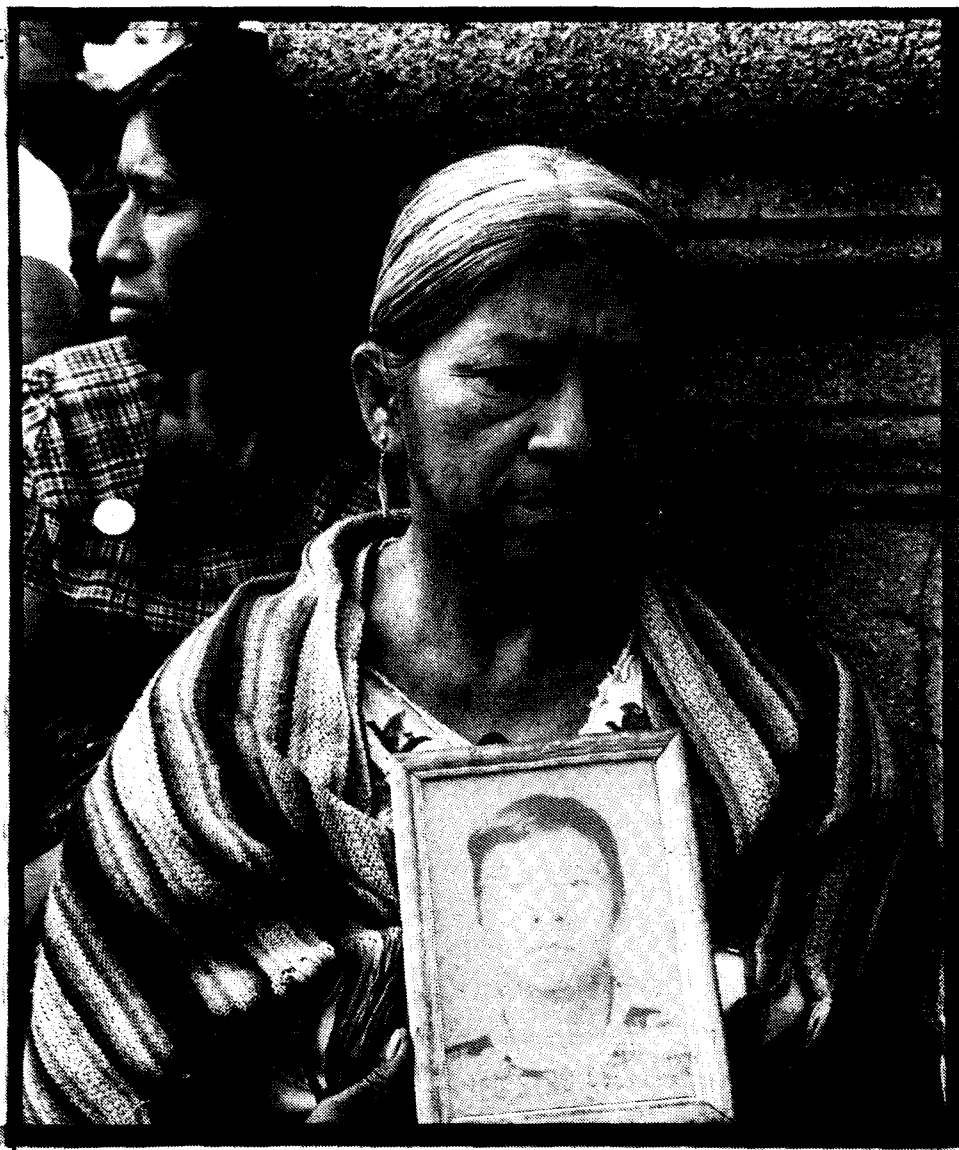
The failed coup's success: By May, however, extreme right officers' cliques and conservative business associations were relentlessly criticizing "socialist tendencies." And on May 11, hundreds of troops marched on the capital from two rural army bases in an attempted coup. The coup was put down but in its aftermath the government has reeled in most of its moderately reformist programs. The Cerezo administration's shift to the right has been marked by its refusal to renew any conversations with the country's guerrilla organizations, and by its inability—or lack of will—to deter a sharp rise in human rights violations around the nation.

"Those behind the May uprising did not necessarily want to remove President Cerezo from power," said Nineth de Garcia, head of the country's independent human rights group GAM. "Instead, they successfully carried out a technical coup d'état aimed at pressuring the government to back down on reforms and adopt right-wing politics."

In June, the government reneged on all the agreements contained in its March accord with the unions and mass organizations—grouped in the Labor and Popular Action Unit (UASP)—and passed new conservative economic measures. An 8 percent devaluation of national currency, for example, combined with the authorization of huge price increases for most fuels and various basic basket goods, has led to rampant inflation since July.

The measures have particularly angered the UASP, sparking a wave of protest marches throughout the nation and rioting in some rural areas. The demonstrations culminated in August in the first general strike in Guatemalan history.

Political freedoms have also disappeared after May, as human rights violations increased around the country. "Political violence rose alarmingly as a result of the May 11 events," Guatemala's official human rights ombudsman, Gonzalo Menendez, candidly



The mother of one of Guatemala's disappeared in 1987. Political violence is again on the rise.

Slamming the door shut on a "democratic opening"

told *In These Times*. "We are receiving many more reports of rights abuses since then, including kidnappings and assassinations."

In fact, independent counts based on local press reports tallied 95 murders and abductions in May alone, a fourfold jump over the 21 cases reported in April.

GAM says at least 492 people were assassinated and 186 kidnapped from January to November, and the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs, which labeled Guatemala the worst civil rights violator in the Western Hemisphere in 1988, claims President Cerezo is "essentially incapable of impeding continuous human rights violations by extremist civilians and the military."

The death squads—which many human rights organizations link to the army—especially targeted the progressive groups that began organizing under the political opening. A wave of bomb attacks, for example, destroyed *La Epoca's* offices and forced the correspondents from the official Soviet and Cuban news agencies, both of which had opened offices here at the beginning of 1988, to flee the country. And since October hit squads assassinated at least two union activists, a member of GAM and leaders from various peasant and grass-roots organizations around the country.

"The surge in political violence is a direct response to the growth of the popular movement, and the death squads are now targeting higher-level leaders," said one founding UASP director who requested anonymity.

Terror not talk: The government now adamantly insists that the guerrilla organizations, grouped in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), lay down their arms and join legal politics before any new dialogue can take place. Since May constant death threats against members have forced

most civilian groups to abandon efforts to pressure the government into negotiations.

Bomb attacks against two directors of the Political Studies Center (CEDEP), which drew up an elaborate cease-fire proposal and planned to sponsor a conference in Costa Rica between the URNG and local political leaders to discuss the plan, convinced CEDEP to drop the project.

One member of the National Reconciliation Commission (CRN), formed under the Central American peace plan to assist in the pact's implementation in each country, resigned from the panel after repeatedly receiving death threats. The commission planned to meet with the guerrillas to evaluate possibilities for reopening dialogue with the government, and ex-CRN member Mynor Pinto acted as the group's principal liaison with the URNG.

"There has been a radicalization in Guatemala of those opposed to cease-fire conversations," Pinto recently told *In These Times*. "The government now has a triumphant attitude and favors a military solution to the conflict."

The commission did meet with rebel leaders in August, but CRN members confided to *In These Times* that the meeting produced no concrete results. These sources said the CRN decided to discard all efforts to renew government-guerrilla conversations due to the Cerezo administration's firm opposition to dialogue.

Indeed, the government says the guerrillas are now virtually defeated and estimates that the URNG's armed combatants could be completely eliminated over the next three to five years. "The constant violent confrontation between Guatemalans has disappeared," claimed Cerezo last month in his end-of-the-year address to the nation. "We

can state confidently that we have practically achieved peace in Guatemala."

Who's behind the massacres? The government's confidence is due in part to new counterinsurgency strategies in the extensive northern province of El Quiché (which borders Mexico), a center of army-guerrilla conflict since the '70s.

In the center of that province in a region known as the Ixil Triangle, which is still considered a rebel stronghold, the army managed to wrest more than 4,500 civilian collaborators from the guerrillas' mountain camps (see *In These Times*, Nov. 9, 1988). The army estimates that until now some 5,000 to 8,000 peasants formed the URNG's backbone of social support in that region, and military offensives now aim to deplete the rebels' social base by drawing the civilian population out of the mountains, rather than attacking the URNG's combat units.

But, although commanding army officers in El Quiché say the new strategy has weakened the URNG, they contradict the Ministry of Defense's claim that the rebels are virtually defeated. Moreover, the local media reports that the guerrillas remain active in at least nine of the country's 22 provinces, and the URNG claims that it inflicted 1,984 casualties among government troops in 721 military actions throughout the nation in 1988.

The URNG also claims the army has planned broad counterinsurgency operations for the coming months, which would include an escalation in repression against the guerrillas' suspected social bases in conflict zones. Since October, 63 peasants have been abducted in three mass kidnappings in combat areas. Forty-eight of these people disappeared in the province of Chimaltenango, less than 30 miles from the capital, where the guerrillas are attempting to reinstate activities on a wide scale.

On November 26, 22 peasants were massacred in the village of Aguacate in Chimaltenango, the first such massacre since the war reached its peak in the early '80s. The army and the guerrillas blame each other for the Aguacate murders, but almost all independent groups here refuse to condemn either side until a full investigation is completed. In the meantime, the Aguacate incident provoked a massive protest march in December against the general rise in human rights violations.

"Much of the growing political violence is due to the ebb and flow of the war," said Congressman Victor Godoy, a member of the congressional human rights commission here. "As the possibility of dialogue fades, human rights violations increase, and the country tends to polarize."

Back to the table: In an effort to brake that polarization process, the CRN is now organizing a national dialogue to begin next month, in which the government and all of the country's "legally recognized" organizations will discuss the nation's economic and political crisis.

But the URNG will be excluded, and most unions and grass-roots organizations have little faith in the forum's ability to push the government to initiate economic and political reforms. "We don't believe the dialogue will lead to concrete resolutions," said one UASP spokesperson. "Our goal is to force the open discussion of the nation's problems to better educate the masses, laying the basis for popular organizations to pressure the government to meet their demands in the future."

Kevin Robinson is *In These Times'* correspondent in Guatemala.

IN THESE TIMES JAN. 23-31, 1989 9

REAGAN'S LEGACY of HOT AIR

Two weeks ago *In These Times* launched a three-part series on the "greenhouse effect." Part one examined the implications of global warming, its causes and its potentially devastating effects in this country and around the world. As atmospheric scientist Michael Oppenheimer has said: "We are talking ultimately about life on this planet becoming impossible. This past summer provided a set of images which begin to paint a picture of what things are going to look like if we don't act."

In order to stem both the sea level rise and the agricultural drought anticipated within the next generation from the greenhouse effect, a growing chorus of scientists and policy analysts are saying that the use of fossil fuels in the world must be cut at least 50 percent. In addition, both the production of industrial chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and the deforestation of rain forest regions must stop immediately. The need for expanded research and development into energy alternatives and massive global planning to cope with the climate change has never been greater.

The U.S. is contributing more than any other nation to the problem. This country emits an estimated 26 percent of the carbon dioxide from fossil-fuel burning that is adding to the greenhouse effect and is also the world's leading CFC producer.

Thus America should be taking the lead in seeking solutions to alleviate the coming crisis. But under the Reagan administration, as George M. Woodwell of the Woods Hole (Massachusetts) Research Center puts it, "The last eight years have been more than a disaster. They have set us back 20 years in dealing with this issue."

Part two recounts the story of the Reagan administration's eight-year-long policy of neglect.

By Dick Russell

CONTRARY TO THE BURST OF HEADLINES and TV news broadcasts that accompanied 1988's drought and heat wave, the "greenhouse effect" did not surface suddenly last summer. Scientific evidence about impending climate change and the ensuing disastrous results has been mounting for more than a decade. It has also been long acknowledged that current industrial and agricultural practices are responsible for the steady buildup of "greenhouse gases" trapping heat within the Earth's atmosphere.

Yet the Reagan administration not only failed to implement any policy changes to affect this situation, but also reversed earlier efforts of its predecessors. Indeed, throughout its tenure, the administration largely refused to acknowledge that planetary warming was anything to be alarmed about. And it was not simply a case of neglect. *In These Times* has learned that in more than one instance the administration deliberately shut off the flow of scientific information—and actively sought to cover up its implications.

The most telling story of the federal government's effort to hide the truth from the American people begins in the summer of 1987. That was when the proposed testimony at a congressional hearing on the greenhouse effect by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) climatologist James Hansen was submitted by NASA to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review. The procedure itself was not unusual, being required of all federal agencies. But what happened to Hansen's testimony, particularly later, was a form



Part two recounts the story of an eight-year policy of willful neglect.

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tration's pressure on the NASA scientist.

Censoring the unmentionable: The OMB had become increasingly powerful during the Reagan years, maintaining a kind of shadow veto over the annual budgets—and thus the regulatory capability—of government bodies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But in November 1987, when Hansen again was asked to come before a Senate committee, this time the OMB went a step further.

Throughout many sections of Hansen's testimony, a former NASA employee told *In These Times*, changes had been made. "They wanted to soften the implications of his data," says the source, who requested anonymity. "Where he would say something 'clearly' indicated that the greenhouse effect was in evidence—with all that implies—OMB would alter it to read 'probably.' They were clearly trying to make the language less absolute."

Hansen asked whether he could be allowed to keep his original testimony if he spoke not as a government spokesman but as a private citizen from New Jersey. OMB granted his request, though his statements did not receive much public attention at the time.

Then came the summer of 1988, when, amid one of the worst heat waves of the century, Hansen once more appeared before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on June 23. This time, speaking as a Goddard scientist, his statements of "99 percent confidence" that "the greenhouse effect has been detected and is changing our climate now" made national headlines.

After this, according to a source on a House committee staff who also requested anonymity, rumors surfaced in Washington about a meeting of high-level government officials—including representatives from the White House and OMB—"basically trying to figure out how to keep Hansen quiet." NASA then sought to send a different spokesperson, higher up than Hansen in the agency's bureaucracy, as a witness before a subsequent House committee hearing on the greenhouse effect.

"When we found out there was some sort of problem happening," the committee source says, "we called back NASA's congressional liaison person and said, 'If we don't get Hansen, we'll have an empty chair.'" Hansen was then allowed to testify, though "he had to add something saying that this didn't represent NASA's opinion."

Michael Oppenheimer, an atmospheric scientist studying the implications of climate change for the Environmental Defense Fund, a private organization in New York, says about the situation: "The fact that there's a government agency [OMB] which is seeking to exercise a veto power over the scientists of other agencies is repugnant. This administration has just been paranoid about anything that would imply, even indirectly, that industry has to make any changes at all."

Hansen chose not to comment to *In These Times* on the above allegations, saying only, "I think we [scientists] have an obligation to point out clearly the consequences of our findings, particularly when we're funded by the federal government to do research, and not to bury it in so many caveats and so much technical discussion that the conclusions are not obvious to the policy-makers."

This issue, according to policy analyst Rafe Pomerance of the Washington-based World Resources Institute, "really represents a huge opportunity for NASA. Astronaut Sally Ride has been calling for a 'mission to planet Earth.' Now two NASA scientists, Bob Watson

and Jim Hansen, have captured the imagination of millions by their respective analyses of the ozone layer and greenhouse problems. They are really contemporary heroes—our two 'astronauts' of recent years."

But so far NASA's hands have been tied by the OMB and perhaps other high officials. For eight years the Reagan administration paid no more than lip service to the greenhouse effect, and it scrupulously avoided any evidence that would force a change in its energy, environmental and agricultural policies. Now, as Pomerance puts it, "people are finding out that it's very, very late in the game."

Prophecies of disaster: Evidence pointing toward an eventual dramatic climate change has existed for a very long time. At the onset of the Industrial Revolution, an 1861 article by British physicist John Tyndall first suggested that slight changes in atmospheric composition could bring about a variation in climate. By 1896 Svante Arrhenius, a Swedish Nobel Prize winner, was warning that "evaporation" of the world's coal reserves in the furnaces of industry might be releasing enough carbon dioxide (CO₂) to alter the content of the thick blanket of gases that make the Earth habitable.

It was 1938 when another Britisher, G.S. Callendar, emphatically stated that humankind's burning of carbon-based fossil fuels was changing the atmosphere. And in 1957 two Americans, Roger Revelle and Hans Suess, warned, "Human beings are now car-

In more than one case, the administration deliberately shut off the flow of scientific information—and actively sought to cover up its implications.

rying out a large-scale geophysical experiment of a kind that could not have happened in the past nor be repeated in the future. Within a few centuries we are returning to the atmospheres and oceans the concentrated organic carbon stored in the sedimentary rocks over hundreds of millions of years."

Revelle was instrumental in incorporating accurate, regular measurements of carbon dioxide concentrations into the program of the 1958 International Geophysical Year. Monitoring programs at Mauna Loa, Hawaii, and the South Pole ensued. Potential future impacts on the global climate were explicitly discussed in a 1965 report to the Science Advisory Committee of then-President Lyndon Johnson. But, Revelle remembers, "there was no real alarm or sense of urgency at the time." Indeed, Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon, abolished the President's Science Advisory Committee.

It was 1974—the year of Nixon's resignation—before the public was officially informed that pollution was changing the upper atmosphere. That year scientists announced that industrial chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)—widely used in aerosol spray cans, as refrigerants and in foam packaging—were gradually puncturing the stratospheric ozone layer that shields the Earth from an overdose of the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

In the clandestine corridors of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 1974 also marked publication of a classified study about com-

ing climate change. In "A Study of Climatological Research as It Pertains to Intelligence Problems" that was declassified in 1977, the CIA reported that "leaders in climatology and economics are in agreement that a climatic change is taking place and that it has already caused major economic problems throughout the world."

Foreseeing eventual widespread political and economic instability, with attempts by nations to obtain grain any way possible amid drastic food shortages, the CIA study continued, "The new climatic era brings a promise of famine and starvation to many areas of the world." It added that "though the issues are important, the U.S. has a limited capability in climatic forecasting," because few scientists are trained in the field.

It is not known whether incoming President Jimmy Carter was made aware of the CIA's findings. But Carter did move to establish Hansen's climate studies program at NASA. Under his administration the U.S. also unilaterally banned ozone-depleting CFCs in aerosol cans in 1978. The EPA went so far as to recommend a freeze on all U.S. production of these chemicals, now also known to contribute about 20 percent to the greenhouse effect.

That was the era of the "energy crisis." And even if the escalating cost of Arab oil and not the looming climate crisis provided the impetus, higher gasoline prices and a major push for greater energy efficiency did serve to substantially cut down on U.S. output of carbon dioxide. (CO₂, scientists estimate, accounts for about half of the gases creating the greenhouse effect.)

Carter also set the nation for the first time on a "renewable energy" course. In 1978 he established a Solar Energy Research Institute and committed the U.S. to achieving a 20 percent reliance on non-fossil-fuel energy sources—solar, wind and other renewables—by the year 2000. His 1980 budget included \$597 million for solar research. He even had solar panels installed on the White House roof to heat the water.

Yet it wasn't all full speed ahead for a shift toward a cleaner energy policy. Carter also initiated a synthetic fuels program—since gutted by Reagan as economically unsound—that would have contributed still more CO₂ to the greenhouse problem. And in 1979, despite strong warnings from scientists participating in a World Climate Conference, a report by the government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concluded, "Few, if any, scientists believe the carbon dioxide problem in itself justifies a curb, today, in the usage of fossil fuels or deforestation."

Business as usual: With Ronald Reagan's ascension, all pioneering studies or programs initiated under Carter quickly bit the dust. A case in point is the fate of David Slade, who had headed a new Department of Energy (DOE) carbon dioxide unit under Carter. Slade had talked tough on the coming greenhouse effect. He was prone to making strong statements before congressional committees such as: "We're dealing with an issue that involves the functioning of the total physical global system, the total biological global system and the total societal system." And his program was, in the words of one researcher, "a model of how a bureaucracy could do something good."

Around the time Reagan took office in 1981, Hansen and his Goddard colleagues published an article about the greenhouse effect in *Science* magazine which received page-one coverage in the *New York Times*. But just as climate change reached public

consciousness, Reagan cut back NASA's climate research funding.

Hansen then approached Slade at DOE, who said he would make sure that some money came through from the Energy Department. But at the same time, incoming DOE top officials were talking to Congress about phasing down some of DOE's own research programs—including the one on carbon dioxide. "They even tried to zero-budget it at one point," recalls Pomerance. Slade was soon removed from his job at DOE.

His replacement under Reagan was a man named Fred Koomanoff, who, Hansen remembers, "made it very clear that he didn't like this publicity [about climate warming] and didn't care to listen to arguments about why our research might be valid." The DOE carbon dioxide division's budget was soon cut from \$12 million to \$8 million. And Koomanoff, whenever he was asked, downplayed the greenhouse effect, insisting that more needed to be learned about the carbon cycle. Only 5 percent of the new budget was spent on computer models of climate scenarios, while most went for broader studies and conferences. "The posture was, simply, study the situation, don't do anything," says Pomerance.

George M. Woodwell, director of the Woods Hole Research Center and a long-time follower of government policy on climate change, recalls, "Koomanoff was variously quoted making statements like, 'People who say there is a carbon dioxide or climate change problem are blowing smoke.' He preferred to focus on the fact that the human population is growing, therefore the demand for energy is expanding and must be fed—sort of a classical supply-side approach. That is attractive to some of course, particularly those in the power-generation field."

Power generation, in the hands of the CO₂-gushing oil, auto and electrical industries that had long controlled it, was indeed all that Reagan's DOE seemed interested in—besides nuclear research, that is. Reagan reportedly even considered eliminating the DOE, until he was reminded that it bore responsibility over the production plants that keep the Pentagon's nuclear arsenal stocked.

With foreign oil prices tumbling, and the Department of Interior pushing to open up federal lands like the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge and offshore drilling areas to domestic exploration, it was fuel-as-usual policy—cheap, abundant and everlasting. This drove three environmental groups last August to assail the administration's energy policy as an "environmental tragedy."

Reagan's scorecard: The following are the highlights of Reagan's slash-and-burn campaign:

- In a single week in 1982 the Reagan administration slashed \$100 million from the \$135 million budget of the Colorado-based Solar Energy Research Institute and cut its staff in half. Denis Hayes, who coordinated "Earth Day" in 1970 and had been directing the institute under Carter, immediately resigned. "A conscious campaign was conducted by the Reagan administration," Hayes says, "to take what had become a thriving multimillion-dollar solar industry and reduce it to a shambles."

- While federal energy subsidies for domestic crude oil producers increased to \$8.58 billion in fiscal year 1984, tax credits were eliminated for both wind and solar energy (in 1985 and 1986, respectively), essentially halting development of these renewable technologies. Carter's solar panels—which reliably heated water in the White House

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kitchen for seven years—were removed during roof repairs. During his reign Reagan slashed the total budget for renewable energy programs by 80 percent. Today the federal budget for solar energy stands at about \$100 million—five times smaller than under Carter.

- The annual research budget for improvements in energy efficiency—aimed at encouraging people to install less power-consuming lighting and improve insulation of their homes and offices—now stands at \$156 million, compared to \$344 million in 1980. And it's that high only because Congress stepped in last year to nearly double the funds proposed by Reagan. He also vetoed a bill first called for in 1978 to save more energy by establishing appliance efficiency standards. Eventually in 1987 he signed a considerably weakened version.

A million-dollar federal study into the potential of energy conservation, undertaken by numerous experts from around the country, concluded that the nation's economy could grow 80 percent by the year 2000 and still use approximately half as much fuel as in 1980. The Reagan DOE attempted to keep the report from being released publicly, but the ploy failed when a Congress member had the entire text printed in the *Congressional Record*.

- Under pressure from GM and Ford, the Reagan administration also relaxed fuel efficiency standards mandated by Congress back in 1975, lowering them from 27.5 miles per gallon to 26 mpg in 1986 for post-1986 model vehicles. According to alternative energy pioneer Amory Lovins of Colorado's Rocky Mountain Institute, that seemingly small "allowance" has already wasted more oil than currently exists off-limits in Alaska and off the California coastline.

- Under Reagan the federal government gave \$15 billion in subsidies to the nuclear power industry in 1987 alone. When the greenhouse effect became a household word last summer, the first to hop on the bandwagon for "clean," non-fossil-fuel energy was the nuclear industry. Nuclear energy is once again being touted as a "solution" to global warming, despite its potential dangers, exorbitant costs and proliferating wastes.

EPA drain: While the DOE was systematically dismantling energy programs that would help in alleviating the greenhouse effect, the EPA did serve at times as the administration's lone Cassandra. But like Edgar Allan Poe's raven, the agency ended up still sitting by the chamber door, its own "nevermore" muted by more forceful voices.

In October 1983 the EPA issued a report calling for immediate steps to deal with expected changes in world temperature. But only three days later the National Academy of Sciences released a study contradicting the EPA's findings. Although conceding that the coming warming resulting largely from CO₂ emissions was "cause for concern," its report baldly stated that there was no need for immediate action. Time needed to be spent "improving our knowledge" of the situation, rather than contemplating any change in current patterns of fossil fuel use. William Nierenberg, chairman of the academy's carbon dioxide assessment committee, told the *New York Times*, "We feel we have 20 years to examine options before we have to make drastic plans."

Reagan's then science adviser, George Keyworth III, promptly praised the academy's findings and called the EPA's "unwarranted and unnecessarily alarmist." No evidence existed, said Keyworth, that any

environmental effects would be "pronounced enough to require near-term corrective action." And so, amid the conflicting reports, the public didn't know who to believe. Ignorance was bliss, and the status quo was preserved.

For almost three years the EPA had nothing more to say publicly about the greenhouse effect. Agency officials did not attend a 1985 conference in Austria, sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program, which brought together about 100 scientists and policy advisers from 29 countries. In the conference's conclusions it called for urgent policy re-evaluations: "Reductions of coal and oil use and energy con-

gress took action on its own. In passing the Global Climate Protection Act of 1987, it required the president, through the EPA, to develop and propose to Congress a coordinated national policy. Last March, 42 senators—about evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans—followed up by signing a letter urging Reagan to seek a global convention on the greenhouse effect. Predictably, the administration responded that such a meeting was premature. And when media heat on the greenhouse issue came to a boil last summer, the EPA apparently decided it was too hot to handle.

Shortly after Hansen's headline-making testimony before a congressional committee, an "International Conference on the

ment's National Climate Program. Its intent, according to Woodwell, was foremost to attack the data of NASA climatologist Hansen. "They blasted the hell out of him, trying to prove him wrong," says Woodwell. "It amounted to so many bees buzzing under a dishpan."

Then in October the EPA suddenly took a much stronger stand on the greenhouse effect, issuing a draft report to Congress titled "The Potential Effects of Global Climate Change in the U.S." It warned, "We cannot simulate in a laboratory what will happen over the entire North American continent. We cannot be certain that a forest will be able to migrate, whether fish will find new habitat, how agricultural pests will proliferate or how impacts will combine to create or reduce stress. The results are also inherently limited by our imaginations. Until a severe event occurs such as the drought of 1988, we fail to recognize the close links [among] our society, the environment and climate."

In recent years the EPA also found itself torn between conflicting administration viewpoints on the protection of the upper and lower atmosphere from industrial chlorofluorocarbons. CFCs, produced by such multinational American corporations as DuPont and Allied Chemical, are a multibillion-dollar business. To its credit, the EPA took the lead in pushing for an international CFC agreement. Two years ago Thomas had called for a near-total global phaseout of the chemicals. But under pressure from manufacturers and other government agencies the EPA again compromised.

When the Montreal Protocol was signed in September 1987 most of the world's industrialized nations—including the U.S.—decided only to cut half their CFC production by 1999. And the treaty allows developing nations a 10-year grace period beyond that, during which CFC consumption can grow to meet "basic domestic needs" (see *In These Times*, Aug. 17, 1988).

Global foot-dragging: Scientific experts and environmentalists generally regard the international treaty as a significant first step, but agree that it doesn't go nearly far enough in addressing CFCs' role in the ozone layer and greenhouse crises. And the U.S. can't go it alone in making the needed changes to save the atmosphere. Global survival will require unprecedented global cooperation. But in the international arena, as with the domestic one, the Reagan team was playing a different game.

Indeed, in the case of nitrogen oxides—a greenhouse gas that contributes another 10 percent to global warming—the U.S. stymied initial efforts at an international agreement similar to the ozone Montreal Protocol. Emitted by the burning of fossil fuels and in petrochemical agriculture, nitrogen oxides also add substantially to the acid rain problem and other forms of ground-level air pollution. When the U.N. first proposed a Protocol on Nitrogen Oxides in 1985—which was designed to limit fossil-fuel emissions in North America, the Soviet Union and Western Europe—the Reagan administration declined to participate. But by last year a rift had developed within the government. The EPA and the State Department favored the treaty, but the Interior Department opposed it.

Last June 23 a letter from five Republican senators beseeched then presidential candidate George Bush to convince the President's Domestic Policy Council to back the treaty. While the overwhelming majority of other nations had agreed to a 30 percent



servation undertaken to reduce acid deposition will also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.... While some warming of climate now appears inevitable due to past actions, the rate and degree of future warming could be profoundly affected by governmental policies."

It wasn't until June 1986, at a congressional hearing on the atmosphere, that the EPA again attempted to buck the Reagan system. Spokespersons from the State Department, Commerce Department, DOE and White House science office all supported continuing the do-nothing policy. Only EPA administrator Lee Thomas opined that it was time to intervene on the greenhouse problem.

Finally, a little more than a year ago, Con-

Changing Atmosphere" convened in Toronto, Canada, in late June. It was attended by the prime ministers of Canada, Norway and Indonesia, among other dignitaries, but not a single high-ranking American official showed up.

The U.N., Canadian officials and environmental groups demanded to know why the U.S. had sent only a deputy assistant secretary of state. EPA spokesman John Kaspar answered that the conference was a "technical meeting" where staff-level attendance seemed more appropriate.

The bureaucratic tangle over the greenhouse effect continued into the cooler autumn months of 1988. In September the administration convened a Washington conference sponsored by the Commerce Depart-

reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions, the senators wrote, the U.S. had "steadfastly insisted on an international policy which would allow its emissions to actually increase." But Bush opted not to attend the pivotal meeting. Finally, on August 6, Reagan did agree to freeze national emission levels of the pollutants at 1987 levels, clearing the way for U.S. participation in the international accord.

Another critical international issue is the destruction of tropical rain forests. The rain forest areas of South and Central America, as well as elsewhere, have succumbed to development projects and agriculture at a staggering rate in recent years—about 100 acres per minute. These regions once compensated for the carbon dioxide buildup from fossil fuels by reabsorbing vast amounts of CO₂.

Today, rain forest razing accounts for an annual CO₂ increase perhaps 20 percent to 50 percent as great as that from fossil fuels. Scientists have estimated that the wholesale burning of a single area in the Brazilian Amazon known as Rondonia was responsible for about 10 percent of last year's carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere.

Here again, the Reagan administration not

finance more hydroelectric dams in the Amazon. "Which makes you wonder," says Randy Hayes of the Rainforest Action Network in San Francisco, "whether their environmental department is just window dressing."

Soviet-American alliance: Until very recently, window dressing was just about all the administration offered on the global-cooperation front. Back in December 1987 Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov included in their post-summit communique an initiative to "promote broad international and bilateral cooperation in the increasingly important area of global climate and environmental change." But only one followup meeting has been held so far.

Scientists from the two nations privately initiated a "greenhouse *glasnost*" last April—seeking to begin an electronic dialogue through desktop computers about how climate changes might affect both countries and influence things like the grain trade—but the Defense Department intervened. The Pentagon withheld permission to ship Apple Macintosh personal computers to participating Soviet scientists, on grounds that they contained sensitive advanced technology. After a six-month delay, the problem was resolved by a decision to use IBMs or similar models already readily available in the U.S. and Europe.

Finally, on December 13, the national science academies of the U.S. and Soviet Union did form a joint Committee on Global Ecology Concerns. Warning that the Earth's "ecological security" is endangered, the new committee said that after it investigates threats to the global environment it will issue policy recommendations to its respective governments and to international organizations.

A recent three-day meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland, also brought together governmental representatives from 35 nations to discuss climate change. The U.S., which sent a State Department official, called for the formation of three "study committees" to examine scientific evidence, impacts and policy responses, with reports to be completed by the middle of 1990. The U.S. is heading up the policy group. The next rounds of discussions are scheduled for early this year in Washington, the United Kingdom and Moscow.

This activity led one EPA official to say, "We seem to be entering a new phase, where governments are talking to one another about the greenhouse effect. But something to watch is how the U.S. really supports this process, in terms of how rapidly we're prepared to move—so it doesn't become just 20 years' work for bureaucrats."

Bush's scorecard: The next move is up to George Bush, and no one knows for sure what direction he will choose.

Bush has hedged when questioned by reporters about what kind of budgetary commitments he will make on environmental issues. "We have to recognize that there are not all the monies available that I would like to see for all the good things that need to be done by the federal government," he responded to a question about acid rain at a December press conference. As chairman of Reagan's Task Force on Regulatory Relief, the vice president was far more inclined to appease industry than do anything about toxic hazards. Bush's new White House environmental adviser is Boyden Gray, his former legal counsel who advised industries in 1981 to come directly to the task force if they encountered problems with federal regulatory agencies (see *In These Times*, Oct. 19, 1988).

Continued on page 22

Greenhouse neglect: missed signs of the *Times*?



James Hansen

James Hansen, head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has been bathed in controversy in recent months. His congressional testimony last June, maintaining that the greenhouse effect was already changing our climate, made him an overnight celebrity—and a pariah to the Reagan administration (see main story).

But when the *New York Times* bannered its January 3 "Science Times" section with a lengthy piece titled, "Scientists Link '88 Drought to Natural Cycle in Tropical Pacific," it appeared to many interviewed by *In These Times* that the federal government's leading expert on climate change had suddenly shifted positions.

Maintaining that Hansen agreed with this analysis, the *Times* article went on to say that any change in the frequency of drought conditions "will not start to be noticed until the '90s," he [Hansen] said. But did the *Times*, which disavowed global warming as the 1988 weather "culprit" and highlighted a scientist's quote that nature simply "rolls its dice in April every year," cloud the issue and obfuscate Hansen's position? Apparently so, according to the NASA scientist, who responded the next day with a letter to the editor of the *Times*. His cover letter stated:

"Based on many phone calls I have received in the past two days, it is obvious that the 'Science Times' article on the 1988 drought (January 3) has created a major misunderstanding about my position on the possible relation between the greenhouse effect and droughts. I hope that you will consider promptly publishing the enclosed letter to the editor."

"The reasons for clarifying this issue go far beyond my desire not to have my opinion misrepresented. As you probably know, there are bills related to the greenhouse effect being considered in Congress, and there are international discussions of the issue."

Hansen's letter to the editor read as follows:

"The summary of my view of the relationship between the greenhouse effect and the 1988 heat wave and drought is misleading. The article states that I agree with Dr. Kevin Trenberth's analysis relating the drought to equatorial Pacific temperatures, and it implies that I believe the greenhouse effect is not yet a factor in heat waves and droughts."

"Every drought can be related to current and antecedent climatic factors such as the position of the jet stream, soil moisture, snow cover, and ocean temperature patterns. That will be true even if the greenhouse effect greatly increases the frequency and severity of drought. Trenberth's analysis, relating equatorial temperatures, atmospheric waves, and the position of the jet stream, is excellent

and may have captured key factors influencing the 1988 drought pattern. Other climatologists will place greater importance on factors such as ocean temperature in the North Pacific, antecedent soil moisture conditions, and other factors. The ultimate test of competing theories about seasonal climate fluctuations will come when these mechanisms are applied to seasonal climate predictions before the fact, not six months retrospectively.

"As I testified to the U.S. Senate during the 1988 heat wave, the greenhouse effect cannot be blamed for a specific drought, but it alters the probabilities. Our climate model, tested by simulations of climate on other planets and past climates on Earth, indicates that the greenhouse effect is now becoming large enough to compete with natural climate variability. The model yields a hot summer about 60 percent of the time in the U.S. in the '90s, compared to 33 percent in the period of climatology, 1950 to 1979. By 1989 this probability has reached 50 percent in the model. Droughts in the U.S. increase similarly in the model. These are hard predictions which will be tested within the next decade.

"We know from paleoclimate variations on Earth that greenhouse gas changes have been a principal mechanism for large global temperature changes in the past. Man-made greenhouse gases added to the atmosphere in this century are beginning to rival in amount the greenhouse gas additions associated with past climate changes from glacial to interglacial conditions. The observed global warming of 1° F in the last century is consistent with the expected warming due to the growth of greenhouse gases in that period. I believe that this empirical evidence, together with the theoretical (model) studies, is ample justification for my testimony that the greenhouse effect is changing our climate now."

"There are many uncertainties in specific predictions of future greenhouse climate effects, but these do not alter the conclusion that large climate changes will occur during the next several decades if we continue to rapidly emit greenhouse gases. I believe that we should take now those steps to reduce the greenhouse effect which would make good policy anyhow. Examples are: phase out chlorofluorocarbons (which destroy ozone and cause 20 percent to 25 percent of the greenhouse effect), improve energy efficiency (reducing dependence on foreign sources of energy and improving our balance of payments), and discourage deforestation (preserving the habitat for invaluable biological species)."

"These are personal opinions and are not meant to represent policy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration."

William K. Stevens, who wrote the *New York Times* article, told *In These Times* that he interviewed Hansen and stands by his reporting of Hansen's comments. He also noted that not all experts agree with Hansen's findings. Stevens added that editors at the *Times* discussed at length that the article should not downplay the significance of the potential greenhouse effect. Unfortunately, many readers told *In These Times* that they were left with precisely that impression.

—D.R.

Reagan's Energy Department consistently dismantled energy programs that would have alleviated some of the greenhouse effects.

only failed to provide leadership in addressing the problem, but also encouraged international development loans that increased decimation of the rain forests. The Treasury Department oversees the U.S.'s role in the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other global lending institutions. Indeed, the U.S. appoints the head of the Washington-based World Bank, is its largest donor, and usually gets its way on funding requests.

Both the World Bank and IMF subscribed to a plan proposed by then Reagan Treasury Secretary James Baker that called for "structural adjustment loans" to developing countries. Essentially the message was: import less and export more. Many developing nations chose to export agricultural commodities, but the only land available to grow more crops and raise more livestock was in the rain forests. The situation became increasingly acute in Central America. More than 90 percent of its exported beef continues to be sent to the U.S.—predominantly to fast-food chains—while the rain forests disappear.

In addition, the World Bank under Reagan gave Brazil a \$500 million loan toward a highway project that paved the way for destruction of a huge virgin slice of western Amazon rain forest, including Rondonia. In Indonesia another \$600 million from the World Bank kicked off a plan that threatens some six million more rain forest acres. Only recently has a clause in a congressional spending bill required the Treasury Department to explore ways in which the World Bank and IMF can promote debt relief in exchange for conservation measures in developing nations. The World Bank has now established a 60-plus-member environmental division.

Yet the institution is currently considering another \$500 million loan to Brazil to help

EDITORIAL



Reagan fails to revive the imperial presidency

Ronald Reagan leaves office with the highest popular approval rating of any president since the end of World War II. Yet despite his deep commitment to strengthen the power of the presidency in relation to Congress, the office remains much as Reagan found it. During his first term Reagan seemed to sweep all before him. His priorities—to increase military spending, cut taxes and undermine social welfare programs—were all obsequiously followed by Congress. Congressional independence, which had been on the rise since 1965, seemed at an end. The imperial presidency, which had crumbled in the face of the Vietnam War and Watergate, appeared to be rising from the ashes of failed usurpations of power. Unlike Presidents Johnson and Nixon, Reagan not only knew what he wanted but also seemed to have a popular mandate for his goals. And yet, in his second term—and for reasons similar to those that did in Johnson and Nixon—Reagan's power, if not his popularity, rapidly eroded.

The good old days: Throughout most of American history, Congress—as the branch of government most closely representative of the people of the United States—was the main arena of policy debate and formulation. The president saw to it that the laws were executed, and he performed the ceremonial functions of head of state. But except during the Civil War, when Abraham Lincoln used his authority as commander in chief of the armed forces to keep the union together, presidents before the turn of the century normally looked to Congress for guidance.

The change in the presidency occurred as the United States changed from a nation of farmers and small manufacturers to a society dominated by giant corporations. When the U.S. emerged as a major player among the imperial powers of the late 19th century, the presidency developed its modern role as chief executive officer of corporate capitalism. Theodore Roosevelt was the first of our modern presidents. He stole the land from Colombia to build the Panama Canal, he intervened in the Dominican Republic to protect American investors there in the face of a democratic revolution, and he sent the entire American fleet of battleships around the world to intimidate Japan.

After Roosevelt, the powers of the presidency grew most rapidly as a result of two world wars and the Great Depression of the '30s. During World War I, Woodrow Wilson demonstrated on an unprecedented scale the two new roles of the president—legislative leader and exerciser of delegated legislative power. But even before the war, Wilson had pushed through legislation for the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Reserve Board and established the Bureau of the Budget, which for the first time gave the president the initiative in budgetary matters.

Wilson was followed by Franklin D. Roosevelt who, during the Depression and World War II, further enhanced and institutionalized presidential power, creating the office as we have known it through most of the postwar years.

Institutional tradition: Ironically, this process of steadily increasing presidential power, which has created the "big government" that Reagan constantly campaigned against, is also what he sought to restore in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate. His goal of overcoming the "Vietnam syndrome" required an unhampered presidential ability to intervene against revolutionary movements around the globe without having to debate the merits in Congress—or anywhere in public. His desire to impose a balanced budget that cut social welfare to the bone and raised military spending to ever-increasing limits required the absence of popular input through the people's elected representatives in Congress. In short, institutionally, Reagan was very much in the tradition of Wilson and the two Roosevelts, all of them social liberals.

But Reagan ran up against similar problems that plagued Johnson and Nixon, along with some of his own. He was personally popular, but his programs were not. And he wanted so badly to conduct a war in Nicaragua—which was opposed by the vast majority of Americans—that he did so clandestinely, in violation of a congressional restriction he had signed into law. Ultimately, he forced Congress to reassert the power it had assumed during and after the Vietnam War.

This is all to the good. Congress should have power over foreign policy at least equal to that of the president, and the Congressional Budget Office should have as much input into budget-making as the Office of Management and Budget. Our democracy is much safer in the hands of Congress, where, however limited, there is opportunity for public debate and popular pressure. We have survived Reagan as symbolic king. We would not have survived Reagan as absolute monarch.

IN THESE TIMES

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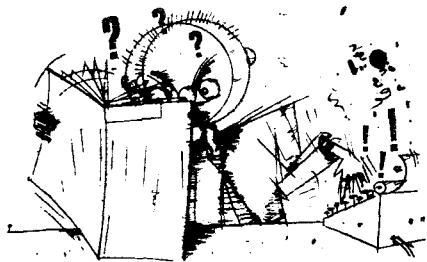
LETTERS

RU 486

I AM ALWAYS PLEASED WHEN IN THESE TIMES covers controversy pertinent to women's health issues (ITT, Dec. 21, 1988). However, I would like to see more of us who are longtime activists in the women's health movement publicly question whether the anti-woman groups should define the terms of debate over the uses of RU 486—the so-called "abortion pill"—especially at a time when legal surgical abortion is so seriously threatened.

We're being stamped into defending the marketing of an abortifacient without discussing its real benefits and risks. When studies on the benefits of a medication are conducted by its commercial developers, we shouldn't be so willing to accept their claims. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviews these studies, but only rarely does it conduct its own independent study of a commercial developer's drug or device.

The FDA does not guarantee safety, only relative safety; that is, they weigh the benefit-to-risk ratio. There's a long and painful history to various drugs and devices marketed specifically to women in the last 20 years: high-dose estrogen birth control pills, estrogen-replacement therapy, DES, Depo-Provera, some IUDs and Silastic breast implants. Most were FDA-approved for a specific use, others were prescribed by physicians for other than FDA-approved uses. But all have caused illness, impairment or death in a significant number of the world's women.



When we are told that RU 486 is 85 percent effective used alone and 95 percent effective used with prostaglandin, those figures represent effectiveness under controlled conditions. What will be the actual effectiveness if and when women have access to the drug? Estimating exactly when to take this drug following a missed menstrual period is not going to be easy.

Our fascination for the quick solution in pill form is disturbing and potentially

dangerous. The struggle to obtain legal, safe surgical abortion has been the cornerstone of the current women's liberation movement. The rush to privatize abortion may mean reproductive freedom will cease to be a political debate, which it must remain.

Sharon Lieberman
Evanston, IL

to find an escape in the oblivion of alcohol and narcotics.

Legalizing narcotics in the present psychological mood of our country would have the benefit of reducing the crime that the need for narcotics breeds, but it would also remove one of the barriers to much wider use of narcotics by children as well as by adults. There would still be plenty of profits in the merchandising of narcotics to help spread the narcotics habit. Small laboratories making artificial narcotics would proliferate.

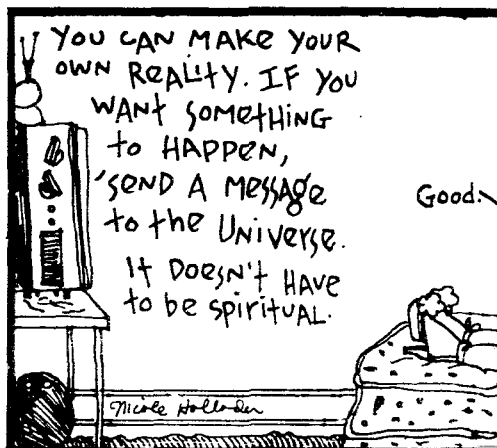
The Chinese, who have been ahead of the rest of the world in many steps of progress over the centuries, concluded long ago that the only sound policy on narcotics was to stamp them out. We should be smart enough not to have to repeat the mistakes they went through to reach that conclusion.

Frederick S. Lightfoot
Greenport, NY

The Chinese way

THE ARTICLE BY STEPHEN ZUNES ON THE NEED to get to the root of the narcotics plague (ITT, Dec. 14, 1988) is the first one I have seen which faces the problem squarely. The "war on drugs" needs to be fought vigorously, but it cannot make permanent headway unless a sense of political and economic power restores hope to the general public and thereby reduces the need

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



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By Jon Reed

THOUSANDS OF GUATEMALA CITY RESIDENTS, smiling and applauding, crowded the sidewalks and leaned out shouting from windows and balconies this past spring, as masked student demonstrators from the University of San Carlos paraded in the bright sunshine through a working-class barrio in the central city. A short distance away, behind a wooden police barricade, heavily armed, camouflage-clad soldiers looked on impassively while a police radio squawked in the background.

Carrying handmade placards and banners ("The People Are Angry," "The Rulers Are Criminals"), dressed in Mardi Gras-type costumes—ranging from police and military uniforms to suit-and-tie bureaucrats to bloody cadavers in white sheets—the thousand-strong column moved through the streets chanting defiantly "Down with the military assassins," and "The people united will never be defeated."

Did this demonstration mean there's democracy in Guatemala? One of the demonstrators, a young man dressed as a priest sporting well-worn tennis shoes, a false mustache and a baseball cap pulled down over his sunglasses shook his head vigorously. "There is no democracy in my country," he said, smiling at my question. "Today we can protest because it is *La Heulga de Dolores*," he added. Wearing disguises and staying together in a crowd, we can denounce the army. Tomorrow, who knows?"

Campus killings: Later that same evening, gunmen in civilian clothes fired on the

Despite terror, Guatemalan students protest openly

demonstration, seriously wounding two students. Government security forces, according to numerous eyewitnesses, made no attempt to detain the gunmen as they fled in a vehicle without license plates. The following day the AEU (Association of University Students) headquarters at San Carlos was put under surveillance. Bomb threats were called in to the AEU office. A white panel truck with polarized windows chased, then tried to run down, an AEU member as he walked off the campus. A similar white panel truck, according to the daily newspaper *La Hora*, had been involved in no less than 15 abductions and murders. When *El Panel de la Muerte*, the death truck, as it came to be known at the university, was finally pulled over, it was being driven by six treasury police officials, in effect a government-sanctioned death squad. A Guatemalan judge in the case, after being kidnapped (along with a lawyer colleague who was murdered), later dropped the charges against the six treasury police who, according to the national press, were under the overall supervision of Christian Democratic President Vinicio Cerezo's own former personal bodyguard, Oscar Diaz.

"We must not forget," said a human rights activist in the capital recently, "that this nightmare is happening in a country that

Reagan and Bush have lauded for its 'return to democracy,'" a country annually receiving \$150 million in aid from the U.S. government, and even more money and arms from Western Europe, Israel, Taiwan and South Africa.

At least seven University of San Carlos student activists have been kidnapped and murdered during the past school year. Not far from the AEU office, a wall mural commemorates Oliverio Casteneda (murdered in 1978), as well as the hundreds of student martyrs of the '80s: "You can massacre our leaders, but as long as the people exist, there will be revolutionaries," says the mural. Since the fall of 1987, an average of 100 civilians per month have disappeared or have been assassinated by right-wing death squads. "There are no political prisoners held by the government," according to Cerezo. The reason for this is simple, according to human rights organizations that have visited the country: the military and government security forces torture and murder every "suspect" that they take into custody.

Going public: The AEU only recently has taken the dangerous step of organizing openly, marching in the streets and displaying its banners in massive trade union and *campesino* demonstrations in Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango. The AEU has publicly joined the UASP (Union of Labor and Popular Action) federation, a broad nationwide coalition of peace and social justice forces—encompassing just about the entire aboveground opposition in Guatemala. Since January 1988, the UASP has organized mass street protests and strikes, forcing the Cerezo government to negotiate with the popular movement.

In spite of the continuing reign of terror, the student movement is advancing and getting stronger. In early July of 1988, the AEU helped Guatemalan high school students launch a successful student strike in four of the country's departments or states. On July 6, thousands of frustrated high school students built street barricades outside their schools and fought running, pitched battles with riot police to demand that the government provide badly needed educational funds. In retaliation, police opened fire on the student strikers. On August 4, 40,000 protestors marched on the National Palace in Guatemala City. After five students were arrested by the National Police, irate demonstrators burned the main door of the legislative assembly building, built barricades in the streets, destroyed a city bus and blocked traffic in the center of the city. The protests ended with the freeing of the five students that afternoon. On August 8, further demonstrations in Guatemala City and six provincial capitals brought out 100,000 people.

When Indian exile leader Rigoberta Menchu returned to the country for a week on April 18, 1988, and was promptly arrested at the airport, thousands of students mobilized within hours. A mass street rally was held in front of the courthouse where Menchu was being held. Swelling international protest forced the government to re-

lease Menchu, prompting military officers, furious over her release and the activities of the "subversive UASP," to attempt a military coup two weeks later. In response to the attempted coup, the U.S. Congress increased military aid to Guatemala—a paradoxical move, considering the army's bloody human rights record.

Student concerns: The AEU is not only working on national issues like human rights and economic justice, several of its leaders said in an interview given this summer to *Report on Guatemala*, but also on student concerns like lower tuition and better university facilities. By North American standards, most of Guatemala's 60,000 university students are incredibly poor, with average combined family incomes of \$120 per month. Classes are overcrowded, textbooks are scarce and expensive and facilities and equipment are overextended. Most students have to work at minimum wage jobs—20 cents an hour—while they try to study. After graduation, any type of decent job is very hard to obtain "unless," as one liberal arts graduate in Antigua said, "you are willing to work for the military or the death squads."

There are government spies, or *orejas*—"ears"—planted throughout the campus, including infiltrators inside the AEU. For a student to stand up and demand rights or to support the rights of others is to risk his or her life. As in neighboring El Salvador, there are no groupies or hangers-on in the ranks of the student movement. The current struggles of the AEU are a direct threat to the establishment. Their alliance with Indians, human rights groups, embattled trade unionists, *campesinos*, liberation-theology Christians and poverty-stricken barrio dwellers is the nightmare of the Guatemalan military and the CIA.

Government terror: On July 22, 1988, a group of 12 heavily armed men, believed to be members of the security forces, forced their way into the house of Oscar Monterroso, a law student at the University of San Carlos and a leader of the AEU. Monterroso, along with a USAC agronomy student, Adrian Guerra Roca, was in the house at the time of the attack. Monterroso managed to escape and subsequently denounced the death squad that shot Roca and then dragged him away to an unknown location. Five days later Roca's mutilated body was found by a roadside outside the town of Palencia with seven bullet wounds.

In spite of dangers, the AEU continues to organize. The group has several ambitious undertakings in the planning stage, including a health clinic and a housing assistance center for the poor, but lacks necessary funds for the projects. Recently, the AEU asked foreign solidarity groups to help them raise money. They also hope to start a radio station and an audio-visual center to facilitate political education. On October 14 the AEU called on students to support 500 staff members at San Carlos University who went on strike and occupied the main university's building as part of a protest action against the university's realignment of pay scales.

For further information on Guatemala solidarity efforts contact NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, 1314-14th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005).

Jon Reed recently traveled to Guatemala.

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By Michael E. Urban

THE GROUNDWORK OF A POLITICAL *perestroika*—much heralded, long-awaited and, ultimately, rushed through—has been laid in the collection of constitutional amendments just adopted in the USSR. The term “amendments,” however, misrepresents what Mikhail Gorbachov and company have wrought. It would be far more accurate to regard what was ratified at the Nov. 29-Dec. 2, 1988, session of the Supreme Soviet as a reconstitution of the country's political-governmental machinery.

“Democratization” has been the theme song of the project from start to finish. But like so many things in this land where the unacknowledged chief architect seems to have been Lewis Carroll, that word assumes only a distant and, often enough, ironic relation to both the finished product and the process through which it was developed. The slogan “democratization” midwifed the constitutional project at the 19th Communist Party Conference in June and July. Sketchy—if not enigmatic—resolutions on constitutional reform adopted at the conference thereafter became the raw material for a number of “working groups” composed of law professors, legal consultants in government and “responsible people” from the Central Committee apparatus.

These groups labored under the fictive tutelage of a subcommittee of the Supreme Soviet (its members described by one who sat on the principal working group as “quite stupid and prepared to adopt whatever we present to them”) and the direct supervision of A.I. Luk'yanov, candidate member of the Politburo, newly elected first vice president of the USSR and close associate of Gorbachov. By late October, the subcommittee, cum working groups, cum Central Committee staff, cum Politburo (where the project was eventually initialed) had cobbled together a long series of “proposed” constitutional “amendments” that were duly printed in almost all newspapers for public assessment.

Popular indifference: Most people took small interest in all of this. Imagine a Bush-Dukakis debate on CBS while ABC is carrying the seventh game of the World Series and NBC, “The Greatest Soap Opera Ever Told.” Then visualize, on the one hand, the daily obtuseness of *Pravda* commentary, courtesy of some legal specialist or “responsible person,” and, on the other, a two-hour queue for cosmetics or vodka, and you'll have a reasonably accurate idea of Soviet citizens' attention to the process. Of course, hundreds of thousands of letters on the project were sent to the Supreme Soviet and the newspapers. But as one top party official lamented, a sizable portion (he didn't specify a number) of these were pre-printed for the convenient affixing of a signature endorsing in full the entire enterprise.

But the remarkable thing about the process of public assessment is that *glasnost* has enabled an active public—however small at the moment—to emerge, to argue, to act. In Moscow dozens of meetings were held on the constitutional project, some organized by the authorities, others by the so-called “informal groups” (discussion clubs, political movements and, in some cases, political parties in embryo). I attended 11 of these. No one, with the excep-

Through the looking glass of Soviet democratization

tion of those who authored the amendments and a few folk who simply trust Gorbachov implicitly, expressed support for the project. Quite the contrary. Speaker after speaker railed against the constitutional changes, and the more strident the criticisms the more robust the expressions of agreement from the audience. Unmistakably, a political class now exists in the Soviet Union, and aside from the reactionaries (*Pamyat* and other groups), its members take democratization dead seriously.

Schematically, here are the major points of contention in the constitutional amendments and my reading of the consensus among the politically active with respect to each of them.

Elections: Changes in the electoral system smack of a compromise within the ruling group. Moving in the direction of democracy, we have elections that involve mandatory competition among two or more candidates for each seat (or, for soviets at the local level, a system whereby the number of candidates exceeds the number of seats under contention in each district). Voting is by secret ballot and nominations are unrestricted. From the opposite direction, however, we find two new institutions, emplaced at strategic points, that can be used to switch off the democratic current.

First, in order to appear on the ballot one must be registered by the district electoral commission. Should more than two nominations be put forward, a “pre-electoral district meeting” is held wherein the candidates are appraised and recommendations are forwarded to the district electoral commission. Critics of the project are quick to point out that this procedure enables the local bosses—who dominate the electoral commission—to register only those whom they please and at the same time to hide behind the recommendations of the “pre-electoral district meeting.” In this way, the power to nominate can be confined to the same small circles of influentials who currently run things. The only assured change is that the apparatus must now put up two of its candidates instead of one.

Second, what are called “social organizations”—namely, the Communist Party, its youth league, the trade unions and so forth—have reserved for themselves one-third of the seats in each soviet. These “people's deputies” are not elected by the people at all. They are chosen at conferences or central committee meetings of these organizations. The reaction to this provision among those involved in the debate has been overwhelmingly negative, for it appears to assure the party apparatus an automatic one-third representation in the nominal legislature. Combined with the changes in the machinery of government, this aspect of the reform, most fear, amounts to an automatic majority for the apparatus in the effective legislature.

Governmental reorganization: The Soviet legislature will hereafter be a tripartite body with three legislative tiers (a Congress, Supreme Soviet and Presidium), atop which sits a president who, among other

things, legislates by decree. The lower (or, if you've been listening again to Lewis Carroll, “higher”) body, the Congress, is composed of 2,500 members, a third of whom have been elected in districts, another third elected according to a federal principle whereby the national and subnational republics and regions have formal equality, and the remainder are designated by the “social organizations.” This organ meets for three days each year. Its work amounts to electing a Supreme Soviet of some 450 members, which is to function as a full-time legislature, and the president and first vice president of the Supreme Soviet. No one now knows how the work of the Congress or the elections it conducts will be organized, but the “working group” is currently working on a procedure for this that, assumedly, the Congress will simply accept as its own.

This “South African Parliament,” as one prominent critic on the faculty of Moscow University points out, is the tail on the dog of whatever electoral procedures and nominations lists are presented to it. The general concern is that the 450 deputies elected to the Supreme Soviet will disproportionately be drawn from among the 750 Congress deputies chosen by the “social organizations.” In the three days of its session, the full complement of deputies elected in districts across the length and breadth of the USSR will essentially be strangers to one another and will sit amid a predictably well-organized contingent of deputies chosen by the apparatus, who will dominate the proceedings, and therefore dominate the composition of the Supreme Soviet.

Constitutional court: The theme of democratization also sounds a leitmotif called “government of law.” Hopes were high before the amendments were unveiled that a constitutional court, however vaguely defined, would be included in the package. Its conspicuous absence in the proposed amendments engendered both bitter disappointment and spirited arguments on behalf of a court that would safeguard the law. Even among those critics who were prepared to accept the other unattractive features of the compromise—unequal and indirect voting for a real legislature—a constitutional court remained a fundamental matter guaranteeing that a compromise, rather than another hoodwinking, had been achieved.

Their arguments, naturally, could only be countered from official quarters with shrugged shoulders and the poor mouth: “Of course, it's not perfect, it's only a step.” This “step”—whether forward, backward or, perhaps, straight off the cliff—involves the invention of a unique body, the Committee of Constitutional Oversight, whose 23 members are appointed by the president, with the confirmation of the Congress, from among the country's “specialists in the fields of politics and law.” Rather like the Congress, for whom more (members) means less (power), this committee is charged to inspect all legislation, “acts,” and draft laws from the point of view of their constitutionality and to recommend

appropriate legislative changes to would-be offenders or to their superiors (the Congress, the Supreme Soviet or the Council of Ministers). The force of any challenged legislation or “act” is suspended while the committee appeals to the legislative or executive branch to reconsider its action.

Since the committee has the power to review legislation passed in the republics, a real din emerged in the Baltic, where political and economic *perestroika* is miles ahead of the rest of the country. Should a republic legalize small-scale private holdings—as Estonia recently has—this measure can be struck down as unconstitutional. Should the popular front in Lithuania, *Sąjūdis*, become too influential in that republic's politics, its charter might be suspended by Moscow on a committee recommendation that it has failed to honor the constitution's strictures regarding the “leading role” of the Communist Party (which, as everyone knows, it already has). The bone tossed to the Baltic republics, a stipulation in the final version of the amendment that the committee must include at least one member from each of the country's 15 republics, has done nothing to allay fears in the Baltic that the broad-based movement for regional control of the economy and ecological security will be doused by cold water from the committee in Moscow.

The long haul: An observer cannot help but be warmed by the flickers of democracy that have been kindled throughout this heretofore frozen political landscape. Nor can he be but charmed by the quiet assurance of democratic leaders such as those in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, with whom I chatted while the amendments were being duly approved by the Supreme Soviet in Moscow (albeit not without a handful of negative votes and two handfuls of abstentions). They smiled the smiles of the long haul, regarded the day as a definite setback, but looked at the half-opportunities contained in the amendments as theirs for the taking and the future as theirs for the making.

As this round of *perestroika* has been chiseled into the granite of constitutional change, the clarity of the project stands out in bold relief. Power. Execution. Control. Gorbachov is effectively marching an army of bureaucrats out of their offices in party headquarters across the street (or, sometimes, merely across the corridor) to governmental offices where he and his can watch them, where decisions are taken by government bodies (hence the relevance of the currently resurrected “all power to the soviets”) instead of coughed up from a confounding collusion of actors operating in the party-government nether world. Professional legislators, competent officials, results—these, rather than democratization, are the core values of the reform.

Moreover, none of these can be lightly dismissed. Yet aside from the question of whether these things can be reasonably expected without a dose of democracy far larger than that called for in the Politburo's present prescription, constitutional change has restimulated *perestroika* from below. In this respect democratization inches forward.

Michael E. Urban's latest book, *An Algebra of Soviet Power*, is scheduled for publication later this year.

Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media

By Noam Chomsky and
Edward Herman
Pantheon Books, 412 pp., \$14.95

By John O'Kane

TOTALITARIANISM IS A 20TH-CENTURY malady that arose from the ashes of failed experiments in democracy. Stalinism came in the wake of the democratization of the arts and social life marking Lenin's first decade after the revolution; Nazism blossomed from the dangerous excess and polarization of Weimar, Germany's first democratic government. Intellectuals of the past two generations have been obsessed with the soil that germinated these diseases, in part because its workings have helped us understand better those of democracy itself in the West, consumer democracy as a form that gives lip service to freedom while demanding—mostly unconsciously—conformity.

We know that the absence of freedom and impediments to action are built in and legislated into a totalitarian political system, but a totalitarian *mentality* is something else again. Visionaries of the intellect in the West, from Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno and Wilhelm Reich of the earlier European generation, to the likes of Norman Mailer and Lewis Mumford on American soil, claim to have isolated the totalitarian mentality nesting in the lethargy of consumer self-interest. Every precondition of democratic culture, the enlightened awareness of consequences beyond one's immediate domain, the free flow of information and the social communication of ideas among others, is threatened with extinction. New dimensions of apathy create a void that could be filled by the orchestrators of conformism.

Noam Chomsky begins where the poetic visionaries trail off into abstract irrelevance. For years now he has been documenting—in painstaking and scrupulous fashion—the mechanics of politics, and especially the instinct for manipulation and repression. His recent installment comes as a collaboration with Edward Herman, political economist at the Wharton School of Finance. Together they document the role of the mass media in propping up the totalitarian mentality.

Deconstruction zone: Chomsky and Herman argue that the mass media are manufacturers of consent, not dispensers of the vital information necessary to energize a democracy. In theory, a free press is the linchpin of democracy, preserving freedom of expression and the right of the people to know. It can help citizens maintain control over a potentially threatening government.

CENSORS

Noam Chomsky: As always, painstaking and scrupulous in his critique of political mechanisms.

Chomsky and Herman show how things work in the consent factory

But Chomsky and Herman deconstruct this self-image of the American media, and see it falling into a "propaganda model." The reality is that the media serve a "societal purpose," but only for restrictive segments of society. Its purpose is to "inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state."

The authors stress repeatedly that the media do not function as the propaganda system does in a totalitarian state, but actually encourage spirited debate and dissent. This goes to the very heart of the type of insidious totalitarianism we in the West might recognize: criticism that remains faithfully within the system of "presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus." And the media can manufacture—as opposed to enhancing the natural unfolding of—consent so effortlessly because this powerful system is so thoroughly internalized.

How, we might ask? Roughly one-third of *Manufacturing Consent* is spent clarifying the workings of various measures of selectivity and exclusion in media institutions. The remainder is devoted to rereading the dominant media events of the past two decades: the Vietnam War; elections in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua; the plot to kill the pope; the killing of Polish priest Jerzy Popieluszko by Polish police in 1984. This rereading is an exhaustive re-

search effort that examines the commentaries in virtually every tabloid that covered these events.

All the news that filters through: Chomsky and Herman trace the routes by which money and power are able to "filter out" the news that's unfit to print, marginalize dissent and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their message across to the public. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms dictate what is newsworthy, leaving little opportunity for "alternative" ideas to reach a forum for mass exposure. Dependence on advertising revenues pressures editors and directors to print or telecast what sells, limiting messages that could potentially undermine their power.

Mostly for reasons of timesaving—and reflecting the profit-maximizing vision—the media relies on information provided by the government, business and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power. Those who refuse to package the packaging get "flak" and are disciplined in the form of negative public relations responses on a large scale through organizations occupying the center stage of political consciousness. The ideology of anti-communism is a control mechanism successfully used (especially during the "new cold war" of the '80s) to intimidate pundits into towing the line (since

it's a vague notion, the authors argue, that taps into a very real fear of property appropriation in the U.S., elites and others can be kept continuously on the defensive in a cultural milieu in which anti-communism is the dominant religion.)

The authors' most effective demonstration of how these news filters come to bear collectively to select and frame the news is their chapter devoted to a comparison of the Jerzy Popieluszko case with similar murders in Latin America. If this has only the status of a faint echo in our political imaginations, the point is nearly proven: it wasn't given the sort of coverage that would sustain our ongoing interest. The media automatically creates a distinction between "worthy" and "unworthy" victims as a way of falling into line, of servicing, in the authors' words, a form of ter-

The authors argue that the mass media are manufacturers of conformity and consent.

rorism "protected in a propaganda mode." Jerzy Popieluszko, as a victim in a state antagonistic to the U.S. at the pinnacle of Cold War xenophobia, was "worthy" of repetitive treatment proving a self-evident point: the evil of communism. The pervasive sensationalism of this coverage (the *New York Times*, *Time*, CBS News and other moguls of information pelted the public day after day with the same foregone conclusion) contrasted with the superficiality of attention to real causes, the story in all of its complexity.

A view to a kill: The authors document a number of other treat-

ments of killings in "client states," like El Salvador and Guatemala (Bishop Romero's killing is the principal focus), where "unworthy" victims abound. Scant, if any, coverage, and usually on a one-time-only basis, characterizes attention to the "unworthy," those whose lives and deaths personify the absence of democracy in countries bankrolled by the U.S. precisely for the purpose of staging some progress toward it.

Their discussion of Vietnam is one of the most thorough counterreadings of this media event. Common parlance, developed through a majority of tomes on the media's role in the war's policy outcomes, has indicted a "liberal" press for skewing the facts toward a position of dovish defeatism. Media attention to the major events of the conflict (the Tet Offensive, Paris Peace Talks, etc.), however, generally supported the elite interests to the very last. Cliches persisted well through the termination of the conflict, that we were winning the war, that we were fighting aggression in the interest of creating "democracy." The Tet Offensive, for example, was predominantly discussed in the media as a sign that the enemy was on his last legs. There was a stubborn refusal of what we now know as fact, that this event constituted a turnaround in fortunes for the U.S. that would never be reversed. The fringe, alternative press saw it differently, but their message was never publicized to any great extent until much later (helped by the release of *The Pentagon Papers*). The authors show that the mass media reports on the Tet Offensive and its aftermath essentially mirrored the tenor and content of the pronouncements passed down by Johnson's high-level advisers. They arrive at this striking conclusion: "The manner in which the media covered the events had little effect on public opinion, except perhaps to enhance its aggressiveness and, of course, to instill ever more deeply the basic and unexamined tenets of the propaganda system." The turnaround in the public's attitude toward Vietnam, the suggestion seems to be, occurred as the reality of the conflict, transported ever more intensively and visibly over the years back to our shores, overflowed the media frame.

But still, how? The influence of intractable beliefs, unconsciously held, induces obedience in the face of a manufactured mandate servicing the totalitarian mentality. "Elemental patriotism," Chomsky and Herman offer, the "overwhelming wish to think well of ourselves, our institutions and our leaders," can't be neutralized. Benevolent intent is matched in intensity only by the belief that "we, the people" rule, a central principle of our system of indoctrination shared by media and citizens alike.

John O'Kane is editor of *Enclitic*.

Liberty Denied: The Current Rise of Censorship in America

By Donna A. Demac

Preface by Arthur Miller

Foreword by Walter Karp

Published by PEN American Center,
568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012
175 pp., \$6.95

By Nan Levinson

THE FRAMERS OF THE AMERICAN Constitution, in their pre-science, added the First Amendment to keep in check the tendency of those in power to try to restrict the words and actions of those who disagree with them, and, for the most part, that stipulation has served us well. But as Donna A. Demac shows in *Liberty Denied: The Current Rise of Censorship in America*, even the founding fathers weren't omniscient enough to foresee the policies of the Reagan administration, under which "power has been centralized in the White House to an extent not seen before now in peacetime."

In his foreword to the book, Walter Karp points out that stories of increased censorship, surveillance and challenges to free speech over the past decade won't come as a great surprise to the reasonably attentive reader; most of what Demac covers eventually made its way into the pages of newspapers somewhere in the country. But *Liberty Denied* is significant because it pulls all the pieces together, puts them in context and points out the consequences of this rise in arbitrary power.

Dissent, a dirty word: The consequences are great, ranging from self-censorship and freelance vigilantism to an eroding of scholarly inquiry, the hobbling of technological advancement, a generation with an education resembling Swiss cheese and the pervasive sense that ideas and questions are somehow suspect. Nor does the list end there. Demac illustrates the link between government policy and intimidation on the job; unwarranted intrusion into personal lives; lying by government officials; threats to archives and reliable historical material; and the need for scholars, artists and researchers to bargain their constitutional rights in exchange for funding or dissemination of their work.

Other consequences are harder to document, but no less insidious: the public media have been cast in the role of pariahs, creativity and information are valued primarily for their marketability, and a campaign to squash legitimate dissent—to turn it into something un-American—has been sadly victorious.

The Reagan administration didn't do all this on its own (in the U.S., not only the government censors), nor has any administration really welcomed dissent from its policies or philosophy. But the past eight years have been notable for what Demac calls a "habit" of secrecy in which restriction is championed for its own sake and restraint of information in the name of national sec-



c 1989 Peter Hannan

Dissent: censorship and sensibility

urity has taken precedence over everything else, including congressional intent and, at times, the Constitution.

As illustration, in her chapter on direct government censorship, Demac lists a series of administration policies which, early on, overturned a bias in favor of disclosure that had been developing under previous presidents. Notable among these policies is Executive Order 12356, issued in 1982, which allows information to be classified if it is possible to imagine any danger from its disclosure.

Danger became easy for government classifiers to imagine because of the vogue of a concept known as an "information mosaic." This theory asserts that pieces of apparently benign information have the potential to be pieced together into a harmful

Demac shows how Reagan policies heightened the habit of secrecy.

whole and, therefore, need to be controlled. A favorite example of the peril inherent in an information mosaic is a 1979 *Progressive* article that gave the recipe for an H-bomb based solely on information culled from various unclassified journals. The Reagan administration has used the information mosaic theory to justify restricting the dissemination of scientific and technological research, reclassifying previously available material and barring non-U.S. citizens from professional soci-

ety meetings at which such information is presented.

Sprawling censorship: Inevitably, in reading *Liberty Denied*, the question arises: why was the Reagan administration so successful in its manipulation and restriction of the flow of information and ideas? Demac's answer is multiple. The Reagan administration has isolated itself from the public, leaving it remarkably free from having to confront the consequences of its actions. Its passion for restriction was not only widespread within the government (the departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Education and Energy, as well as the FBI, appear frequently in the book), but federal officials also gave signals to those outside government that censorship would be readily tolerated.

Then there was the fortuitous and rapid advance in information technology that raised new constitutional questions faster than the courts could respond to them. But perhaps most important and most baffling, the administration was allowed to get away with it. If the history of free expression in the U.S. is what Demac calls "the tug of war between government tendencies to suppress those deemed subversive and citizen initiatives aimed at expanding the sphere of freedom," then the citizen team has offered woefully little resistance to those pulling for the government.

Demac, a lawyer and teacher at New York University, uses a simple methodology for exploring what happened and why. Each of her 11 chapters addresses a different aspect of government or private censorship by starting with an introduc-

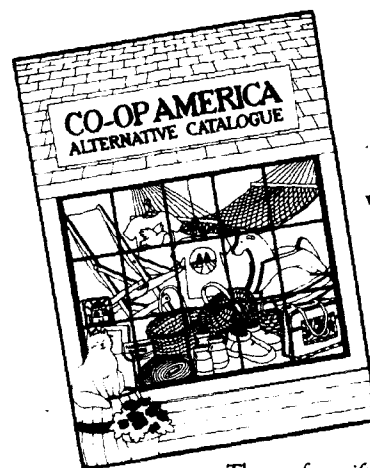
tion to the issues, followed by a brief historical review. She then reports on the most significant examples of abuse in the past 10 years and ends with an exhortation to do something about it, though often this is a recommendation that government do a better job of policing government.

The book's structure is effective in covering a lot of material in a short space, but Demac's tendency to leap whole decades in a single paragraph and to generalize with only cross references to other publications as support can be frustrating at times. Still, her argument is persuasively reasoned, clearly stated and well-documented, and the topic could hardly be more timely in the wake of a presidential campaign long on media events but short on anything resembling information.

Though this glossing over seems finally to have gotten to a fair number of Americans, we have never

been a nation particularly willing to acknowledge censorship in our midst. Even if it sometimes happens, we say, it's so much less severe here than elsewhere that we should be proud, not critical. A dangerous argument, Demac replies, in part because it's not true (censorship has existed here in all eras and in many forms), but also because it plays into the hands of those who would censor. If we don't believe words are important enough to get outraged over, we're undermining one of the rights by which America defines itself as a nation. By showing the extent of the assault on free expression over the past decade, Demac makes it clear that the greatest threat to what Americans cherish most is not violent revolution but, instead, the quiet erosion of individual rights day after day.

Nan Levinson is the U.S. correspondent for *Index on Censorship*.



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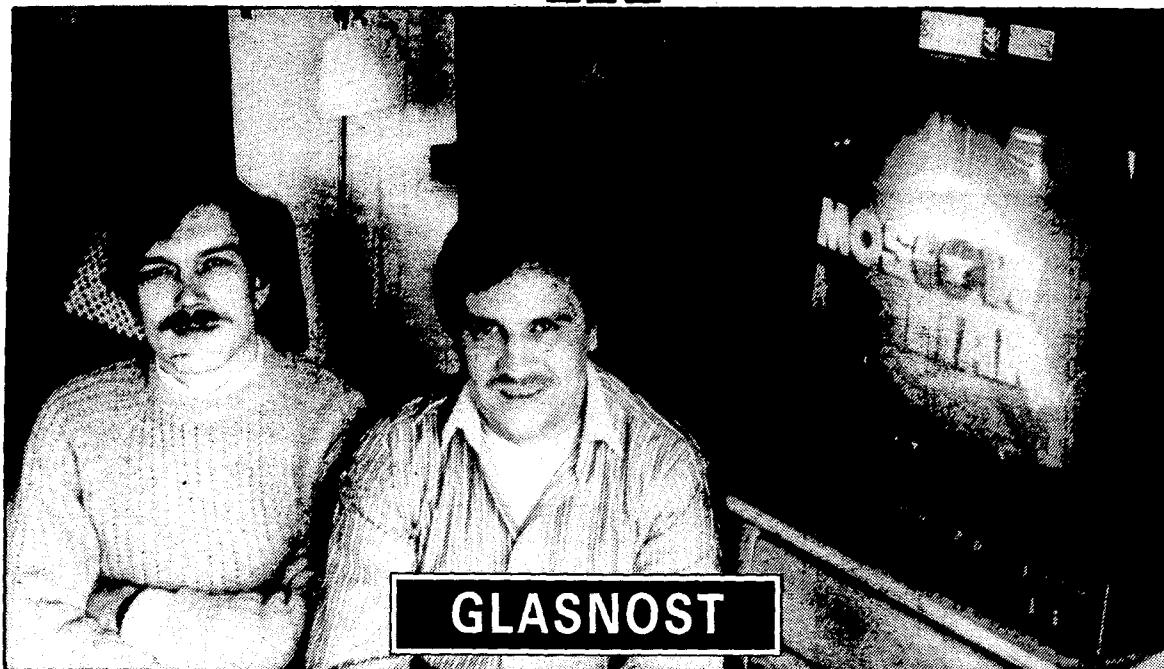
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GLASNOST

Pavel Korchagin and Sergei Skvortsov focus on links to the West.

Soviet TV tries some new channels

By Stephen J. Simurda

THE WAY TELEVISION PRODUCER Pavel Korchagin sees it, his medium is crucial to the success of the dramatic political changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachov.

"Television plays really a very important role because it addresses millions and millions of people," says Korchagin. It's especially important in the Soviet Union's vast rural areas "where the only window where they can get a sense of the changes is television.... It is part of glasnost itself," says Korchagin.

Like a den of bears rousing after a long winter hibernation, large Soviet institutions like the state television network (*Gosteleradio*) are waking up to glasnost and perestroika. These important segments of Soviet society are reaching out to the world in general, and the West in particular, in an effort to boost their economic and cultural diversity.

Joint ventures: And it is this effort that brought Korchagin and Sergei Skvortsov, both senior producers in the international division of *Gosteleradio*, to the tiny western Massachusetts hill town of Colrain last month. In Colrain the producers spent a few days meeting with Edward Wierzbowski and Pam Roberts, who run Global American Television Inc., a small TV production company that specializes in joint ventures with the Soviet Union and sells commercials to foreign companies on Soviet TV broadcasts (see *In These Times*, May 25, 1988).

Sitting in a comfortable American living room, the producers spoke of the fundamental changes going on in their country and their profession, including the seemingly new interest in opening television programming to Western influence.

"The interest has always been there," said Skvortsov. "The interest of the general public and the interest

of the broadcasters. But now the possibilities are much, much wider."

Political changes have broadened those possibilities, Korchagin said. "It is now publicly recognized that until very recently it was not possible politically to do any kind of objective programs about the United States or some other Western countries....No one would show it," he said.

But that is changing rapidly, and the producers came to the U.S. to work on several ongoing projects. With Global American Television, for example, they are planning to produce a movie version of the life of Samantha Smith (the young Maine girl who visited the USSR after writing a letter to Soviet leader Yuri Andropov in 1982), and are negotiating to bring an American-style rodeo to the Soviet Union for a tour and a television special. They are also working on live television links of U.S. and Soviet athletes and factory workers.

Sold American: In addition to the production help that Global American provides on many projects, the firm's role also includes helping the Soviets earn some Western currency from these broadcasts. "On all of these [shows]," said Wierzbowski, "we have the rights to sell advertising when the shows are broadcast in the Soviet Union."

Beginning this month, for example, the Soviet Union will start airing 24 half-hour episodes of *Fraggle Rock*, a children's educational series—the first American series ever acquired for broadcast in the USSR. Adam Shaw, who works for Henson International Television in London, said the show will be broadcast irregularly over 18 months. Working with Global American, Shaw said he and the Soviets are also looking for an American company to sponsor the entire series at a cost of about \$200,000.

The sale of commercials for Western products being aired in the

world's largest communist nation is certainly one of the most dramatic changes visible in Soviet television. It brings much-needed Western currency into the Soviet Union and exposes Soviet citizens to scenes such as Michael Jackson selling Pepsi.

Last year Global American sold paid airtime to foreign companies during three different broadcasts in the Soviet Union, all with an international theme. The last occasion was November 17, when Soviet television aired a joint concert between the New York Philharmonic and the Soviet State Symphony. The sponsors of the Philharmonic's Soviet tour—Coca-Cola, RJR Nabisco and Combustion Engineering—all agreed to sponsor the telecast of

the concert.

Commercial baptism: The Soviets are pleased enough with their first forays into commercialism, Korchagin and Skvortsov report, that starting this month, *Gosteleradio* created a new division called SovteleExport designed specifically to make a profit for the Soviet television network.

"These guys will be selling programs, selling airtime, buying programs, rendering assistance [to foreign production companies working in the USSR] and making money," according to Skvortsov.

But the producers acknowledge it won't be easy to rake in large amounts of cash right away. For one thing, Western advertisers have been slow to snap up advertising opportunities, with many claiming such action is premature if their products aren't available yet in the Soviet Union.

In addition, Korchagin is unsure whether there is that much Soviet television that would be attractive to the West to buy. "We don't see that there is a particular program that, as soon as this department is founded, can be sold in the U.S.," he says.

Besides, viewer preferences in the two countries are quite different. While entertainment programming dominates in the U.S., in the Soviet Union "the idea of entertainment is very much different," says Skvortsov. Almost all programming must mix some more serious content into the entertainment in order to attract viewers, he says.

Commercial conundrum: "What glues our viewers to the screen, at

the moment, is social and political oriented programming," says Korchagin. "No one actually watches entertainment."

And this is one of the reasons the producers say they generally have to work with small U.S. firms. "Here we usually deal not with the networks...[but] with independent production companies or individual stations," says Korchagin. Skvortsov said he thinks the networks are "too commercial to be interested in any kind of programming that might be interesting to both nations."

The producers say their first priority is also satisfying their own viewers, and not the possibility of selling shows to the world. "Our main objective is to bring good programming to the Soviet Union," Skvortsov said. As a result, Soviet television will probably never emulate U.S. broadcasting.

"I think it will always be different. There will be a certain percentage of commercialized programs," Skvortsov said. "But I don't see that central television, as it exists now, will ever become commercial."

There has been talk, the pair revealed, of a group of Russian producers joining forces to start a competing network in the Soviet Union that would lease airtime from the government and try to operate as a profit-making business. Korchagin and Skvortsov view that possibility with the same sentiment one would expect from creative and aggressive producers in the West. "We personally would welcome very much the competition," says Korchagin. ■
Stephen J. Simurda is a Massachusetts freelance writer.

Avant-garde returns in the age of glasnost

Ashik Kerib
Directed by Sergei Paradzhanov

By Karen Rosenberg

SERGEI PARADZHANOV IS A FILM-maker more celebrated than understood. His arrest and imprisonment in the Brezhnev era on charges related to his avowed homosexuality and dealing in art objects brought Soviet and Western intellectuals to his defense, but there was little written in this country about the theory behind his virtually plotless movies. Unfortunately, the fame of Soviet artists is often built more on their martyrdom than on their aesthetic achievements.

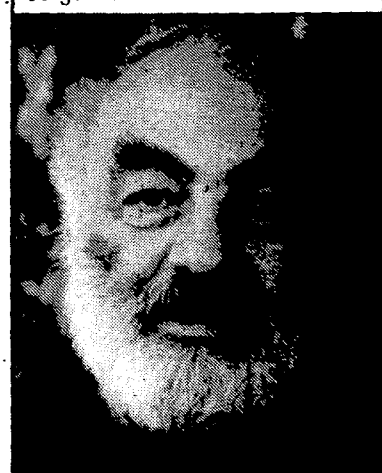
In 1985 Paradzhanov came out with *The Legend of Suram Fortress*, the first full-length film he was permitted to make since *Savat Nova/The Color of Pomegranates*, which was completed in 1969. And this year he has another feature, *Ashik Kerib*.

Perhaps equally significant is the Gorbachov-era re-evaluation of the once-damned movement known as "poetic cinema" with which he is associated, because Soviet as well as Western audiences need a context

FILM

in which to place his enigmatic movies.

Sergei Paradzhanov



Ukrainian director Yuri Ilyenko, who worked with Paradzhanov on *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965), explained the principles behind poetic cinema in a visit to the U.S. last spring. Discrete frames with static tableaux are not just a mannerism of this movement, he told me at the San Francisco Film Festival. In Paradzhanov's shots it seems as if all of history can be perceived in one moment.

"It's the logic of the simultaneity of all things," Ilyenko said. "In the 20th century we seem to live in all eras at once." So Paradzhanov's destruction of plot symbolizes a rejection of the 19th-century belief that history follows a coherent, linear path. And, one might add, it obviously presented a threat to Soviet conservatives who believed dogmatically in the linear, progressive theory of history of that 19th-century thinker Karl Marx.

Ilyenko's explanation makes sense not just of Paradzhanov's past but of his most recent movie. It is based on a short story by the 19th-century Russian writer Mikhail Lermontov about a minstrel named Ashik Kerib who must leave his native Tbilisi to win the gold necessary

to marry his beloved. But Paradzhanov drops much of Lermontov's plot, substituting carefully composed scenes with elaborately dressed actors and colorful props. These shots are held so long that there's time to notice that much of the Caucasian exoticism is store-bought. Costumes with machine-made trimmings and a picture of a sewing machine make it apparent that this film concerns every period—and none.

Like a dance film, *Ashik Kerib* isn't just directed but choreographed. Feasts and ceremonies follow one another insistently, and though their meaning often remains unclear, their organization of life is unmistakable. Every response seems ritualized, which suggests that human beings have little room for free choice or independent action.

Each character has a stereotypical part to play. Ashik Kerib, the picture

of trusting innocence and goodness, is betrayed by the proverbial rival suitor who steals his clothes to prove that he has drowned. The minstrel's mother laments his death in traditional fashion, but his ever-faithful beloved refuses to believe the news and vows to await his return. An evil official who captures Ashik Kerib and orders him to sing wears the obviously false mustache and beard of silent-era cinema. If this

is Paradzhanov's allegory of the fate of an artist under dictatorship, then he apparently sees the despot as a victim too, condemned to play the villain in some trashy vaudeville.

There is much playfulness in *Ashik Kerib*. But like the persecuted Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, to whom this film is dedicated, Paradzhanov is also reverential toward art, elevating it to a religion of sorts. The naked Ashik Kerib is found in

an abandoned church—which could have come out of a Tarkovsky film—and taken to be blessed by a dying minstrel. With his lute, the hero then performs a series of miracles. In the U.S. this belief in the saving power of art is distinctly out of fashion, but it is very much alive among Soviet intellectuals and lends Paradzhanov's film strength of conviction. **Karen Rosenberg** writes regularly on Soviet cinema and literature.



Sergei Kuryokhin will saw pianos in half or do whatever is necessary.

Neoclassical jazz anarchy

By David Parker

RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE PIANIST composer Sergei Kuryokhin is in the midst of his first American tour. He recently performed three nights in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, Calif., with various ensembles of West Coast musicians, playing what might be called neoclassical jazz anarchy. Actually, like many '80s musicians, Kuryokhin is hard to label. He is reminiscent of Carla Bley in his chameleonlike ability to assimilate a wide range of styles.

American music, he freely admits, has had a tremendous impact on him. Having no indigenous improvisational tradition to draw on, the work of artists like John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner and John Cage were essential to the development of his own improvisational style. Yet he is not trying to imitate American jazz. Instead he is attempting to create improvisational forms rooted in Russian music.

Kuryokhin's musical style could be called "neoclassical" in the same sense that one might term the Art Ensemble of Chicago as such. His available recordings from the early '80s (*Ways of Freedom*, *Sentenced to Silence*) are stark, highly confident, improvised atonal constructions for solo piano, duos with saxophonist Anatoly Vapirov (another virtuoso, Russian avant-gardist), as well as a jazz quartet in the realm, but not imitative of, Cecil Taylor. Kuryokhin plays "inside" and "prepared" piano, as well as "on keys," with ease and brilliance on these recordings.

With the advent in '81 of his ensemble, *Popular Mechanics*, which ranges from eight to 50 musicians (including goats and other animals), Kuryokhin began assimilating myriad styles and outrageous theatrics into his performances. From his atonal free jazz vantage point, he has explored ragtime, rock, gangster jazz, tangos, Russian hymns, anthems and classical music and, recently, New Age music.

The crux of Kuryokhin's creative drive is a protean desire to create an authentic Russian music that can hold its own in the international community. This has led him to saw pianos in half, abandon the acoustic piano, and then return to it with windup toys that walk and make noises on the piano as he plays.

His recent West Coast performances with various American musicians, surreal collages of musical styles, were marvelous examples of "controlled freedom," compositional contexts that defined the music, yet allowed maximum freedom for the participants. Kuryokhin has covered a lot of ground since '81, and the eventual outcome of his explorations, like Gorbachov's *glasnost*, can't yet be determined.

Popular Mechanics: Until last spring, Sergei Kuryokhin had been an officially banned musician in the Soviet Union. For seven years, his ensemble, *Popular Mechanics*, played and performed illegally, usually to packed houses. Soviet police

often broke up the concerts. He was forbidden to record on the only legal record label, Melodya, or travel abroad, although many in the West (including Frank Zappa and Brian Eno) were clamoring for him.

But now, quite simply, "Everything has changed."

Kuryokhin is now a member of the Leningrad Concert Organization. *Popular Mechanics* is an official orchestra with full performance rights.

MUSIC

His first record on Melodya will be released by year's end. And along with a spate of U.S. performances, he is making records with John Zorn (forthcoming on the Nonesuch label) and guitarist Henry Kaiser. Kuryokhin also plans to record an album with Laurie Anderson. Less than a year ago, this would have been impossible.

"Soviet musicians can now do absolutely anything they want," says Kuryokhin. "They're even letting

He is creating improvisational forms rooted in Russian music.

rock musicians sing about how lousy Soviet leaders are. They [the Soviet leaders] just look down on the musicians condescendingly. But they don't touch them."

Shrink rap: Kuryokhin has said in the past that "Soviet music is an ideal ground for Western psychoanalysis."

"I repeat that and I will not retract it," he says, laughing. "Here in America, it's easy to survive and to do what you want, compared to our conditions and how we've had to survive."

"In America, if you want to attain something, you set your mind to it and you go up a strong straight path. In the Soviet Union, to get to your goal, for any creative person, the path is curved and crooked, and you have to go around these barriers and those obstacles. And that crooked, warped path, filled with distorted and broken psyches, gives birth to very strange musicians like, for instance, me."

"You might have ambivalent people in your society. But we have people who are so divided that they go insane. No Western psychoanalyst will ever be able to plumb the depths of the Russian soul. There are such subtleties and nuances in the complexes that enter into our

people's psyches that a Western psychoanalyst could never understand them.

"Any simple Russian worker who's had to grow up in the Soviet Union could more easily understand an American psychoanalyst and his soul than any American psychoanalyst could understand a Russian worker."

Soviet syncretism: Are the Soviet people, then, pioneering the neuroses of the future? "Probably that's true," Kuryokhin says.

But he grows more earnest. "Right now, it's such a changing time in everything in the Soviet Union, in life, in culture, in thought."

Yet after a month in the U.S., Kuryokhin is not as confident as he once was that an authentic, non-imitative Russian jazz has evolved: "There was a great striving toward that, but nothing came of it. Same thing for Soviet rock. We're still imitating the West. The fact that they're singing in Russian doesn't make it an original Russian art form."

"I'm a little different. I myself have so long cultivated that Russian, Russian craziness inside of me that everything I organize and do carries the imprint of that inner state in me."

He went on, quite seriously it seemed, to describe a group of pigs and goats he is teaching to play guitars and drums. He wants it to be one of the first Soviet rock groups to come to America. One piglet, he claims, is already composing on the drums. He believes it will one day compose a symphony.

Wayne Shorter once described Thelonious Monk's music as "serious humor." That seems to be the norm for Kuryokhin as well. His attitude and his music are outrageous and ironic. But his goals are vitally serious.

"Before, music in Russian was in the categories of official and unofficial. Now, music in Russia is trying to be simple, solid, whole Russian music, and to bring a meaningful and new movement into the culture of the whole world. That's my only goal right now. Soviet music, not just my own music, should have a distinguished and important place in world culture. And if I can help to do that, then I'll be glad. Because for so many years, Soviet music has been in the asshole of the world."

The records mentioned in this article are on Leo Records, available from the New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

David Parker is a musician living in St. Louis. He is currently working on a record of solo piano music.

Greenhouse

Continued from page 13

Bush did win praise from some environmentalists when he named William Reilly to head the EPA. Reilly, the long-time president of the Conservation Foundation, a private Washington-based environmental group, is regarded as someone who favors compromise over confrontation.

But Bush's choice to run the Department of the Interior is viewed by environmentalists as a potential James Watt-like disaster. The appointee, Manuel Lujan Jr., as a U.S. representative from New Mexico, had one of the worst environmental voting records in Congress during Reagan's tenure. Among other things, Lujan voted to cut funds for energy conservation programs and continues to favor opening the Arctic wildlife preserve to oil and gas exploration.

Bush's new energy secretary is retired

Adm. James D. Watkins, former chief of naval operations and a nuclear submarine commander.

"What we know of Bush from the past," atmospheric scientist Oppenheimer cautions, "is that he's pro-oil and pro-nuclear. If he really wants to deal with global warming, he'll have to come up with some other options."

So whether Bush's proclamation that he's a Teddy Roosevelt-style environmentalist has substance or is just more political rhetoric remains very much an open question. He will certainly be pressured—both domestically and internationally—to keep up with the Soviets. Last September, in a speech before the U.N., Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze called the threat to the global environment "equal to that of the nuclear and space threat" and asked for creation of "an international regime of environmental security." When Gorbachov ad-

ressed the U.N. on December 7 he mentioned the environment more than 20 times. Such statements prompted Michael Heseltine, a power in Britain's Conservative Party, to label the Soviet rallying cry "a carefully crafted attempt to hijack the environmental agenda, partly for ulterior purposes."

Nonetheless, recent actions in both East and West indicate that the greenhouse effect and its concomitant perils are no longer being relegated to the back burner. Three separate bills, all of which would mandate strong measures to deal with curtailing fossil fuels, were introduced in the last congressional session. None has yet gone beyond the committee stage, but these and perhaps other legislative efforts are anticipated this year. Meanwhile, four government agencies—EPA, DOE, the Office of Technology Assessment and the Congressional Budget Office—are currently conducting policy analyses that would outline ways to translate

greenhouse science into action.

Perhaps history will regard the Reagan years as an aberration—an eight-year hiatus from addressing the most critical environmental question of our times. For, as Woodwell says, "This is a craziness we can no longer afford. The only solutions are to reduce drastically the use of fossil fuels on a global basis, to stop deforestation and to shift to enduring sources of energy of various types. What we have witnessed under Ronald Reagan is incredible behavior on the part of any government, when climatic change could easily be the end of civilization as we know it."

Dick Russell writes regularly on environmental issues for *In These Times*.

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Raisin in the Sun

Continued from page 24

"We missed the essence of the work.... The Younger family is part of the black majority, and the concerns I once dismissed as 'middle class'—buying a home and moving into white folks' neighborhoods—are actually reflective of the essence of black people's striving and the will to defeat segregation, discrimination and national oppression."

This new and complete version makes much more difficult the more flagrant misinterpretations of the play. In particular, Asagai's last appearance, when he confronts Beneatha's despair even at the hope of African independence, is an important inclusion. In it, he agrees that corruption and plunder may follow independence but rejects Beneatha's assertion that "there is only one large circle that we march in, around and around." "It isn't a circle—it is simply a long line," he says. "And because we cannot see the end, we also cannot see how it changes. And it is very odd but those who see the changes—who dream, who will not give up—are called idealists...and those who see only the circle—we call them the 'realists'!" At this moment in our national history, we need voices like Asagai's, the voices of higher realism, voices that acknowledge the fate of a dream deferred and still revere the dream.

A Raisin in the Sun has not become dated, and not only because racism persists as a sore on the body politic. Robert Nemiroff has confronted the question of the play's enduring topicality throughout its 30-year history. He believes *A Raisin in the Sun* will outlast even the nation's persistent racist affliction, just as *Romeo and Juliet* has outlasted arranged marriages. "At the deepest level," he says, "it is not a specific situation but the human condition, human aspiration and human relationships—the persistence of dreams, of the bonds and conflicts between men and women, parents and children, old ways and new, and the endless struggle against human oppression whatever forms it takes, and for individual fulfillment, recognition and liberation—that are at the heart of such plays."

It is because those passions run deep that we need an intensely specific work of art to make them real and immediate, especially about people whose participation in that universal humanity has not only been denied by the wider society but denied self-expression. That is what *A Raisin in the Sun* did, and continues to do.

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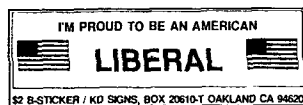
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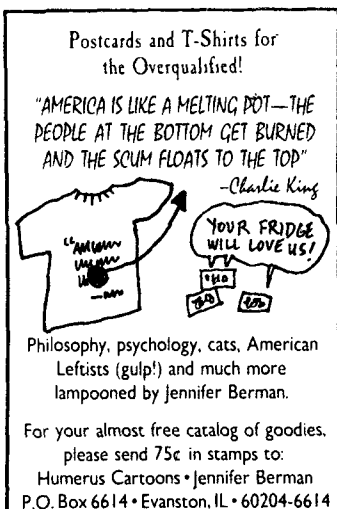
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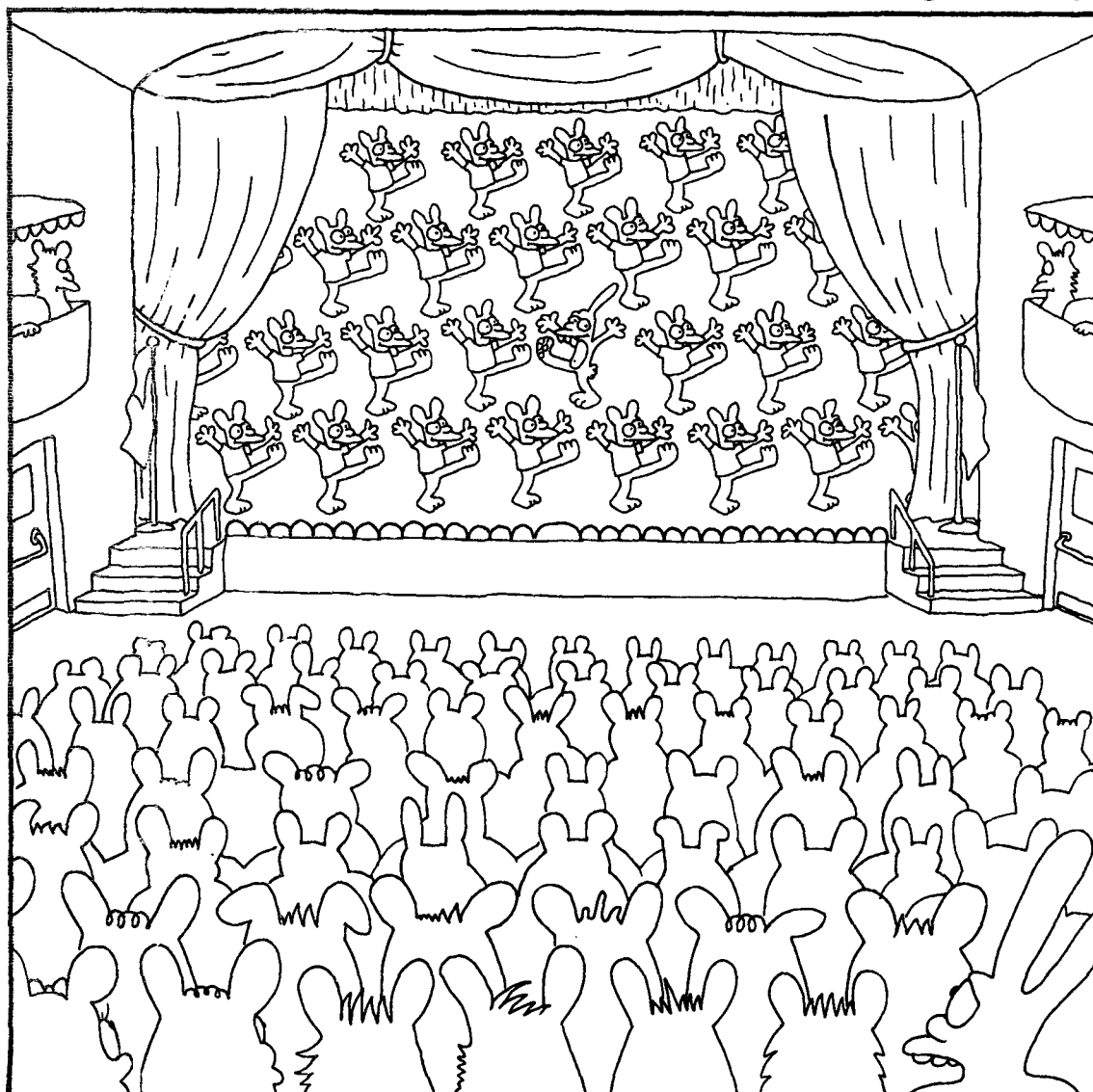
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Raisin's cast: Esther Rolle, Kimble Joyner (foreground), Kim Yancey, Danny Glover and Starletta DuPois (background).

A Raisin in the Sun

By Lorraine Hansberry
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By Pat Aufderheide

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
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—Langston Hughes

A RAISIN IN THE SUN, AIRING ON PBS stations February 1 (but check local listings), is more than a play, less than a movie, and an important demonstration of why we need a public television service.

This new and, finally, complete version of Lorraine Hansberry's celebrated work makes available to people nationwide a great American play. It is about the cruelties of the American dream for African-Americans. Its perceptions are as biting and unforgiving, its drama as excoriating now as in 1958. It is not easy to watch, and television—although assuring national public access—does it active harm, since the urge to flee its conflicts can be satisfied by an easy romp to the refrigerator. But it rewards the pain of recognition with the cleansing catharsis of clarity.

A Raisin in the Sun is well-known—too well-known, in fact, for what it isn't. What it isn't is another "mama-on-the-couch" play, as George Wolf put it in the popular play *The Colored Museum*. What it isn't is a play that could be about "any American family," and the American dream of home ownership. What it is is a devastating illustration of what it means to have "a dream deferred."

Dreams of dignity: The dream of the Younger family—mother Lena, grown son Walter and his wife Ruth and son Travis, and daughter Beneatha—is dignity. Lena's ancestors thought freedom brought dignity. But that wasn't enough. Lena lives with her children in a crowded ghetto apartment in Chicago's South Side. Walter works as a chauffeur, his servant status and subordina-

A new television production of *A Raisin in the Sun* showcases a classic drama.

tion to his mother gnawing at his self-respect. His pregnant wife Ruth can't decide whether to abort their baby and accede to despair, or try to revive their marriage.

Beneatha, Hansberry's alter ego, bursts out of the circle of misery with anger directed at whites and hope for a career as a doctor. She fuels her aspirations with a proto-black nationalist ideology. Her boyfriend Asagai, a Nigerian, evokes both the best in her hope and also its naivete, in his patronizing attitude toward her fierce feminism.

These characters are all vividly symbolic and can easily slide into mouthpieces for their positions. But with few exceptions, these performers, especially Starletta DuPois as Ruth and Danny Glover as Walter, make them flesh-and-blood characters whose torment becomes ours. As Kim Yancey plays her, Beneatha is turbulent, irritating and admirable all at once. At times the stage origin of most of the performances seeps through in the filmed version, but the dramatic crux of the play holds us to them.

This production is clearly a filmed play and doesn't pretend not to be. All the action takes place within the cramped apartment, with no breakouts created for transition to film. But within the parameters of the play's design, this production makes subtle and graceful use of closeups, two-shots and cinematic lighting.

The modesty of the cinematic style appears targeted to the television medium, and it works. Director Bill Duke's background is in theater, and he demonstrates both his respect for the original form and his ability to use the resources of cinema to enhance its effect. "We tried very hard to make sure people knew it was a play, and also to make it hold for the camera," says executive producer Bob Nemiroff, Hansberry's husband and literary executor.

The play revolves around the crisis

brought by a \$10,000 check, Walter Younger Sr.'s life insurance. Lena wants to buy a house, Walter a liquor store; Ruth wants Walter back, and Beneatha wants a medical education with the money. We become sucked into their mutual recriminations after Walter squanders the bulk of the money. Suddenly Asagai brings Beneatha (and us) up short by asking if there isn't something terribly wrong when a family's happiness depends on a man's death.

Roots of turmoil: *A Raisin in the Sun* is rich in insights about a critical moment in black history, in the post-World War II years when affluence hit white middle America and left black America behind, when political gains for blacks were being forced and in the process exposed the enduring power of social and economic inequities, and when black Africa was struggling for independence. Beneatha's fascination with her African heritage and Walter's search for a piece of the economic action are not accidental or timeless.

The social roots of deep antagonisms are also elegantly revealed in this family drama. Although only one white appears in the play, whites are ever-present in the thoughts and actions of these characters as resented (if perhaps unwitting) enforcers of the Younger family's pinched existence. When the lone white appears, a representative of the neighbors' association that wants to buy out the Youngers rather than have a black family in their neighborhood, that resentment boils over into both outrage and wild humor. The association's Mr. Lindner (John Fiedler) coats his bitter pill with complacent talk of understanding through dialogue and of simple economics. This only reinforces the Youngers' conviction that they are being demeaned daily. The most damning statement that the play makes about the state of race relations is that, even after an

eloquent speech about pride and dignity by Walter, Mr. Lindner scurries out as baffled as he came.

The play also illuminates the origins of deep hostility between black men and black women. Those relationships build, of course, on primordial and cross-racial cultural patterns, but the bitterness between Walter and his wife and sister, the inchoate misunderstanding between him and his mother, are both historical and located in the black community.

The center of the play, and particularly of this version because of Glover's powerful performance, is Walter and his weaknesses. But the revelations have much more to do with women's roles. The domination of the black matriarch, the passive-aggressive power of the submissive wife, the strident anger of the young feminist are all put forth as products of a society that both rewards a certain kind of masculinity and robs black men of a way to be masculine.

None of the women characters can assert her own dignity with confidence. When Ruth is sullen in the morning, when Beneatha gets on her soapbox, when Lena shames her children into doing the right thing, it is always clear that a will to common dignity is being contorted by circumstance. When Lena says to Walter that she is at fault for his weaknesses, she is not wrong, but that is not the whole story either, as the play makes us see.

Misunderstood: *A Raisin in the Sun* was a sensation when it first appeared in 1959: it was the first Broadway play by a black to make money. But the three-hour play was cut on its initial run for economic reasons, and other elements were changed to adapt the play to the cast. The 1961 movie starring Sidney Poitier was directed by Daniel Petrie with a near-religious fidelity to the stage version, resulting in a wooden production. This version is the first to represent the play as Hansberry wrote it, complete with two never-before produced scenes.

The play when originally staged was not only successful but controversial. Mainstream critics hailed it, with barely concealed relief, for being "universal," meaning it could have been about whites. Of course, the fact that it is not only about black Americans but black Americans at a particular historical crossroads is what gives it its claim to universality—not the bland kind that means all men bleed, but the kind of universality-in-the-particular hailed by neorealists. It is precisely because they are real people at a particular moment that we can come to understand their humanity.

Critics also praised the film's "happy ending," thus gliding over the family's peril—underlined in this version by the inclusion of a scene where a black neighbor brings in a newspaper headlining a bombing incident. Hansberry commented at the time about one critic, "If he thinks that's a happy ending, I invite him to come live in one of those communities where the Youngers are going." Hansberry, a child when her family moved to such a neighborhood and the near-victim of a stone thrown through the living room window, had reason to know what she was talking about.

Some black activists harshly criticized the film for the Youngers' petit-bourgeois pretensions. Later, Amiri Baraka wrote,

Continued on page 22